Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-SIX • NUMBER THREE • SEPTEMBER 1988

The Coming of Custodial Democracy

Charles Murray

En Route to the Gulag
Irina Ratushinskaya

How Ronald Reagan Weakened the Presidency
L. Gordon Crovitz

The River Temz—A Story
Flossie Lewis

Judaism According to Emil Fackenheim
Robert M. Seltzer

Where Is Zion?
Edward Alexander

Virgil Thomson & Musical Taste
Samuel Lipman

Books in Review: Fernanda Eberstadt/Jeffrey Marsh/Rael Jean Isaac/James W. Tuttleton/David Brock

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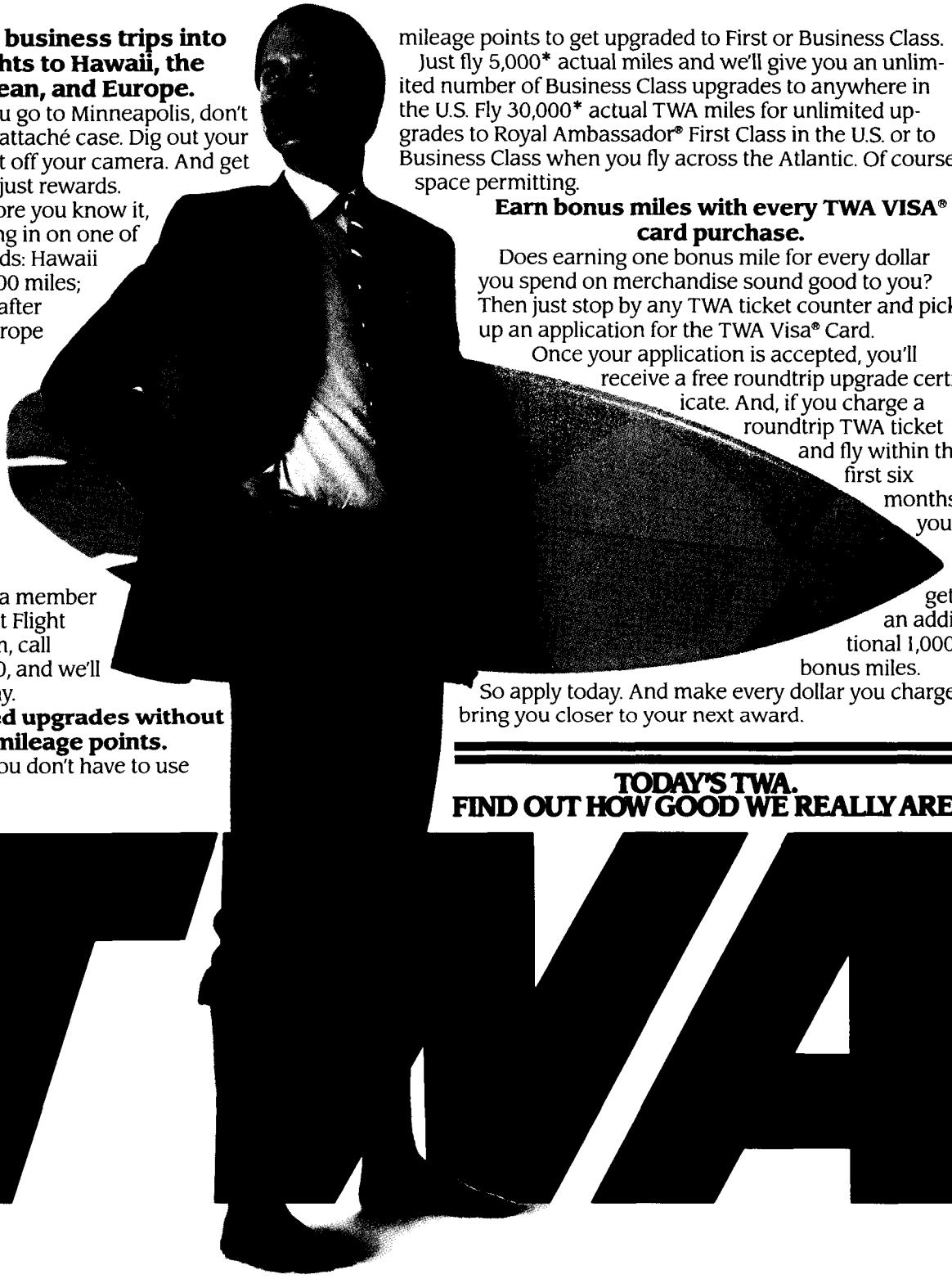

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VOLUME 86 NUMBER THREE *SEPTEMBER 1988*

Articles 19 The Coming of Custodial Democracy *Charles Murray*

25 How Ronald Reagan Weakened the Presidency *L. Gordon Crovitz*

30 Judaism According to Emil Fackenheim *Robert M. Seltzer*

35 En Route to the Gulag *Irina Ratushinskaya*

Story 41 The River Temz *Flossie Lewis*

Observations 47 Where Is Zion? *Edward Alexander*

Music 51 Virgil Thomson & Musical Taste *Samuel Lipman*

Letters 2 from *Stanley L. Nash, Robert Gore Rifkind, Harold Bernard Reisman, Michael Drissman, Ruth R. Wisse, Thomas Fleming, William Rosenau, Edward A. Wynne, Dan Himmelfarb, Bernard Lewis, Milton Birnbaum, Daniel Fuchs, Mary Tedeschi Eberstadt, Eric Gravley, John P. Sisk, Daniel Pipes,* and others

Books in Review 56 Fear No Evil, by Natan Sharansky *Fernanda Eberstadt*

60 A Brief History of Time, by Stephen W. Hawking *Jeffrey Marsh*

62 Peace and Revolution, by Guenter Lewy *Rael Jean Isaac*

64 The Letters of Edith Wharton, edited by R.W.B. Lewis and Nancy Lewis *James W. Tuttleton*

68 Beyond Malice, by Richard M. Clurman; The Coming Battle for the Media, by William A. Rusher *David Brock*

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Letters from Readers

Israel & the Intellectuals

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I very much appreciated Ruth R. Wisse's "Israel & the Intellectuals: A Failure of Nerve?" [May]. . . . It was a bracing reminder of one's obligation to "engage the enemies of Israel in debate," as Mrs. Wisse urges. I have been reading a great many statements on this subject of late, but Mrs. Wisse's article really spoke to me. . . .

STANLEY L. NASH
Fanwood, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ruth R. Wisse's impressive article . . . is an extremely important contribution . . . toward balancing the campaign of distortion and character assassination of Israel that has been going on over the last several months. This campaign has been launched by . . . the media, with the enthusiastic help of many American Jewish intellectuals.

It has occurred to me very often lately that many of these Jewish intellectuals are probably reluctant to give up the "privileged" status, so to speak, of belonging to a persecuted group. Having a connection with an independent nation that defends itself is probably more a source of embarrassment to them now than pride, because Israel has made it very clear that it does not have the margin of security to be defeated even once. When threatened, it has taken and will continue to take the strongest measures to defend itself. . . .

I do not pretend to have the proper explanations for the psycho-social processes of these American Jewish intellectuals, but they are alarming and sad. . . .

AVRAHAM WACHMAN
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I found "Israel & the Intellectuals: A Failure of Nerve?" depressing and familiar. Here in England, the media and the "intellectual" community, some of them Jewish, are indulging in the same vicious sophistry which Ruth R. Wisse describes. The most recent low blow—published on the op-ed page of the London *Times*—came from none other than George Steiner. His august opinion is that no "real" Jew would respond as the Israelis are doing, *no matter what the provocation*. In other words, he is giving the Israelis an attractive option: preferably be dead saints deserving his praise, or remain immoral international pariahs. . . .

HERB GREER
Manchester, England

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was moved and encouraged by Ruth R. Wisse's superb article. . . .

WERNER J. DANNHAUSER
Ithaca, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Cheers for Ruth R. Wisse's article in the May issue.

Mrs. Wisse describes . . . the current ambivalence of many intellectual Jews toward Israel as it really is. These American Jews have obviously simply succumbed to the media blitz. The Israelis shoot two or three Arabs in the act of throwing Molotov cocktails and stones, and there are headlines, photographs, and television coverage. By contrast, about three months ago the papers reported that the Russians had killed thirty-five rioting Armenians in one day, and I did not see a single television report or a single photograph. . . .

ROBERT GORE RIFKIND
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ruth R. Wisse's excellent article will not serve to calm the nerves of the intellectuals. Indeed, nerve does not seem to be the problem so much as the triumph of emotion over reason. . . .

Somewhere in Jewish teaching is the phrase *haba l'hargekha, hashkem v'hargo*—"if one seeks to kill you, hasten and kill him first"—a dictum which sums up the very nature of defensive war, unencumbered by philosophical and, yes, nervous niceties which blind one to reality. One does not normally allow sympathy for a disadvantaged killer to interfere with the reasoned right to self-defense. Had the Allies during World War II stopped to consider the historical reasons which gave rise to Nazism and its aggression (as they were urged to do by pacifist intellectuals), the Nazis might well have killed them in the act of pondering. . . .

The elementary truth that killing is morally admissible when life is threatened has long ago been lost in the thickets of the Left's philo-

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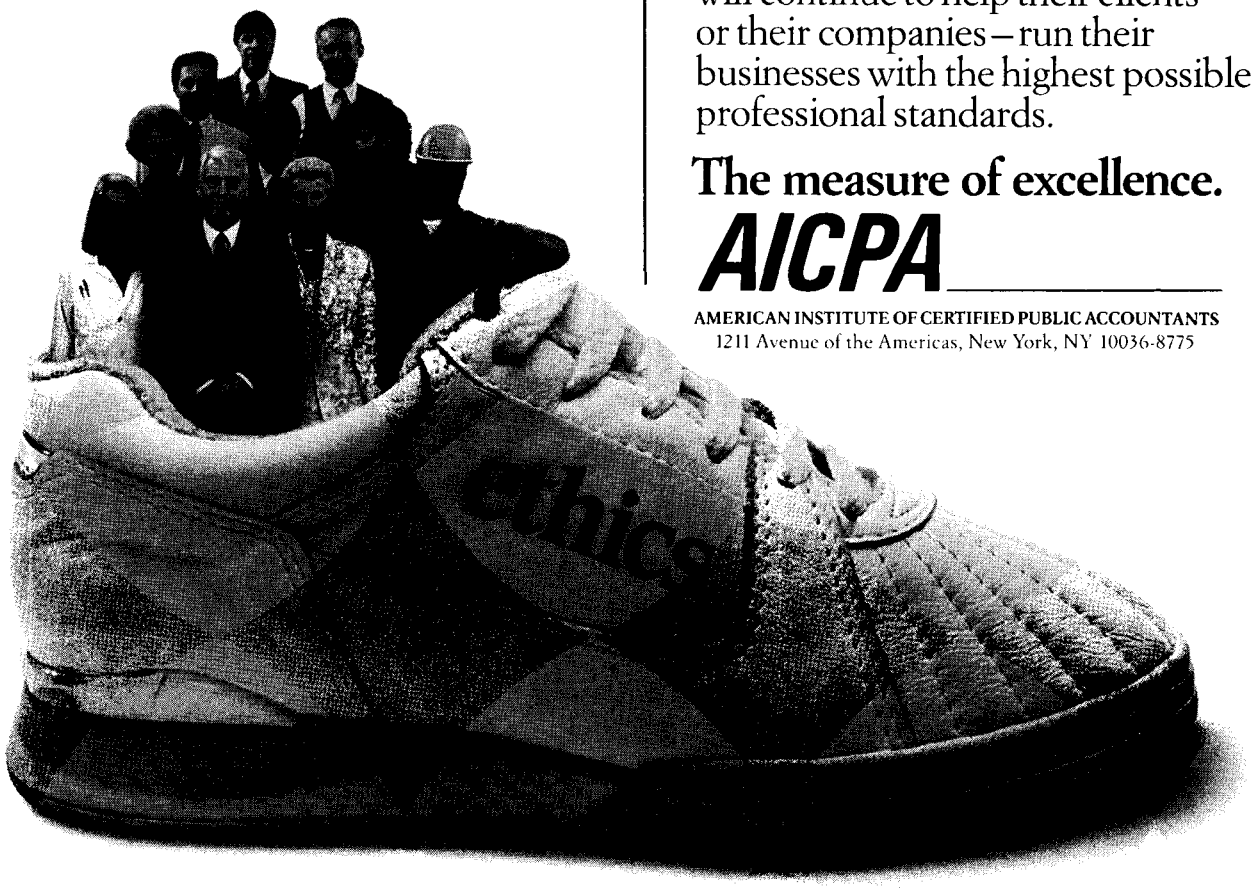

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sophical aspirations, a loss which explains its suicidal behavior. . . .

MENAHEM DUNSKY
St. Sauveur des Monts
Quebec, Canada

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As usual, Ruth R. Wisse defines and expounds on her subject with precision and insight. The American intellectual, almost synonymous to my mind with leftist thinking, has always wallowed in the kind of cheap "anguish" Mrs. Wisse refers to. . . . It is as if, lacking the guts, tenacity, grit, and survivability which distinguish both our own country's and Israel's founders, these intellectuals rely on the only "muscle" they have—their brain—and then use it to kick sand in the faces of those with real courage. . . .

Mrs. Wisse is correct . . . in remarking that, when difficulties arise, "in a significant measure Jewish feelings about Israel take their bearings not from any actions the country may be involved in but from its perceived standing in American opinion."

It is hard to be a Jew. It is certainly not an identity at which the American intellectuals Mrs. Wisse cites, hiding behind their books and typewriters, . . . are very good. When the going gets tough, they run for the cover of popular opinion. . . .

JOAN SWIRSKY
Great Neck, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have always enjoyed everything of Ruth R. Wisse's that I have read, but I was particularly pleased with her article, "Israel & the Intellectuals: A Failure of Nerve?"

Mrs. Wisse's annoyance with American Jewish intellectuals, "leftists" of various sorts, and some of our rabbis . . . is understandable. . . . But it has been my experience . . . that the larger American public is not being fooled by the anti-Israel television networks, biased press, and these self-professed spokesmen for American Jews. Americans know who the terrorists are: they are Arabs, not Israelis. Ordinary Americans know where their interests lie—not with the Arabs but with the Israelis.

In fact, an objective assessment of the situation would suggest that the tide is turning and that the Palestinian rioters, whom Americans recognize as by and large children egged on by their cowardly elders, are being viewed for what they are. I even get the impression from recent news reports that previously dovish Israelis themselves are waking up to the real threat, as outlined so eloquently in Mrs. Wisse's article. . . .

ALVIN A. ACHENBAUM
Irvington-on-Hudson, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

After reading Ruth R. Wisse's article, . . . I am forced to ask whether there exists *any* policy formulated by the government of Israel that permits criticism and open discussion by American Jews. . . .

Assume that water were to cost two or three times more for an Arab than for an Israeli on the West Bank—would that be worthy of discussion? . . . What if special government permits were required only for Arab farmers to plant specific, competitive crops? What if illegal land transfers to Israeli developers resulted in the creation of many millionaires via not-so-discreet Israeli government support? Should Arab laborers earn one-half or one-third the pay of an Israeli doing identical work? . . . Is holding suspects in desert camps for six months without charge perhaps to be censured? Is mass deportation, now a serious political issue, worthy of learned discussion?

It may be that all the items listed above are fictional or the fault of Arab intransigence. It may also be that no occupation is ever benign and that actions of the Israeli government have done more to "weaken resolve" than left-wing rhetoric has. But perhaps West Bank Palestinians should be given something to lose.

Partial unilateral withdrawal is a viable option in my opinion since I have more faith in the Israel Defense Forces than Mrs. Wisse does. Knowledge that a future reoccupation of a proposed independent entity on the West Bank would be the last such occupation might have a salutary effect on everyone.

HAROLD BERNARD REISMAN
Weston, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ruth R. Wisse is correct in identifying the current thrust of Arab propaganda as aimed at the guilt of the Jewish liberal. But she presents arguments and pleas which are vulnerable to the same criticism she levels at others. . . .

A close reading of her article suggests that Mrs. Wisse herself, like the unnerved Jewish intellectuals she criticizes, does not advocate the rightness of Jewish conquest and liberation. Rather, like so many Jews troubled by the *intifada*, she offers the typical defense of the ghetto Jew—that we are occupiers only because the Arabs forced us to defend ourselves. Had they not started the 1967 war, Israel would not have liberated the territories, and would not now dominate the "oppressed Palestinians."

From within this guilt-ridden perspective, the 1967 victory is seen not as a miracle which redressed the balance of power in the Middle East, but as a somehow unfortunate but necessary event for which Israel and its Jewish citizens must apologize . . . since it led to twenty years of immoral occupation and the Arab rebellion of 1987. . . . This attitude accounts for the liberal intellectual's fascination with the "land-for-peace" scenario as a means of redress and atonement. These are no mere academic exercises. The proposals represent attempts by Jewish intellectuals and revisionist historians to return to the "halcyon" days of 1967 . . . when Israel was beleaguered but admired.

What is it in the ghetto neurosis of the liberal Jew that cannot accept the long-established principle that victory brings rewards, in this case the incorporation into the Jewish heartland of Judea and Samaria, previously used as a springboard for invasion?. . .

Mrs. Wisse illustrates the "failure of nerve" she is describing when she expresses agreement with Leon Wieseltier that the greatest task of the Jewish intellectual is "imaginative identification with the enemy." Here lies the very definition of the Jewish intellectual—one who identifies with the enemy under the illusion that sympathy will temper and moderate Arab determination, fanaticism, and hostility. . . .

Instead of willingly accepting the Jewish victory of 1967, Mrs. Wisse seeks to justify Israel's "occupation," and tries to shift the blame for it to the Arabs. Is it not better, she asks, "to condemn the Arab rejectionism that . . . brought the occupation about"? In asking the question she implicitly accepts the Arab contention the the Jewish presence in Judea and Samaria is illegal, and thus she gives away the

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only legitimate argument that Jews have to a state—that it belongs to us by God-given historic right and by conquest. . . .

Unable to escape a sense of guilt, Mrs. Wisse pleads for understanding and love. She begs an insurgent and imperialistic Islam "to accept regional pluralism," and so seeks acceptance and does penance for having a sovereign Jewish state. She wants "unconditional recognition of Israel by every state in the Arab world," not understanding that this is unachievable and worthless, and also irrelevant to Israel's existence. . . .

Finally, Mrs. Wisse insists on the "emergence of a Palestinian Arab leadership that accepts Israel's sovereign presence," that is, a leadership which will tolerate a Jewish national presence on a portion of its mythical . . . homeland. Is there no end to her intellectual illusions? Not only would she hold Israeli policy hostage to hoped-for Arab good intentions, she would, as a Jewish intellectual, be willing to surrender Jewish rights, and demand the emergence of Arab nationalists willing to do the same. . . .

Unlike Mrs. Wisse, I do fear for Israel's soul. A Jewish state that cannot annex its historic heartland, that cannot expel a hostile population from its territory, and, indeed, that cannot resolve how a Jewish state differs from a democratic Gentile one in its values, is in the process of losing its soul. . . .

Mrs. Wisse would do well to discard shopworn apologies and accept the freedom and responsibility of meeting Jewish destiny.

MICHAEL DRISSMAN
Macomb Community College
Warren, Michigan

RUTH R. WISSE writes:

I am grateful for the expressions of support contained in many of these letters. The anxieties that accompany some of them seem appropriate to the situation I tried to describe.

Alvin A. Achenbaum may be right in his observation that "ordinary Americans" know their interests lie not with the Arabs but with the Israelis. The same does not hold for American opinion-makers, who have a way of influencing ordinary Americans. Of Jewish intellectuals—who were the special focus of my article—I expect not merely support for the democratic state of Israel but an engaged counterattack against the defamers of Zionism and the enemies of Israel. Instead, their progressive capitulation to Arab hate-mongers and to the no less virulent anti-Zionism of the Communist world attests to the success of that ideological war against Israel and to the fallibility of intellectuals.

Harold Bernard Reisman's letter demonstrates the nature and consequence of this capitulation. Unwilling to hold Arabs accountable for their deeds and policies, he asks whether we may not focus on Jewish failings (even if he has to invent them). He does not believe West Bank Palestinians when they say they have already lost what they want—which is the state of Israel itself. The hypothetical cast of his letter shows his preference for an imagined politics over the real forces ranged against the Jewish people, and the professed moral impulse animating it is actually a form of moral evasion.

In any case, to my mind none of the real or hypothetical misdeeds cited by Mr. Reisman—and indeed none of Israel's misdeeds over the forty years of its existence—can compare in gravity with the decision of Israel's government in May 1985 to release over 1,000 convicted terrorists in return for three Israelis. Whatever pressures may have impelled such a revision of longstanding policy, the country must take responsibility for the ensuing spread of poison, not least into the uprising within its borders. Yet American Jews have refrained from any comment on an action that was patently "immoral" from a juridical perspective, and extremely dangerous to the nation and the world. That is because American liberal opinion, for obvious reasons, did not raise the issue, thus sparing many American Jews their otherwise obligatory crisis of false conscience.

I believe that my article made it clear that *every* policy formulated by the government of Israel "permits" criticism, because there is no force in the world that can forbid it or contain it. At the same time, every such criticism is a potential political tool. Those who damage Israel in its fight to claim an unexceptional place in the community of nations cannot seek refuge behind the veil of their good intentions.

On the other side of the political spectrum, Michael Drissman holds me responsible for Israel's failure to annex the territories of Judea and Samaria. I would hope that the Israeli polity bases such decisions primarily on long-range political considerations rather than on guilt on the one hand, religious posturing on the other. Though I neither plead nor beg, and court neither Arab understanding nor love, I do demand from Arabs the same level of moral behavior I demand of all human beings. Imaginative identification with the enemy means recognizing when this demand is not being met, so that one can take the proper measures of self-protection. But I do not intend to release the Arabs from expectations of decency, which includes the acceptance of regional pluralism as a political fact. Mr. Drissman is himself closer to his critics than he realizes when he tries to banish those elements of reality that offend him.

American Conservatism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his thoughtful, if mostly negative, discussion of the book I wrote with Paul Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement*, Dan Himmelfarb offered a number of useful insights into the differences between the neoconservatives and the Old Right, whom he calls paleoconservatives ["Conservative Splits," May]. Unfortunately, he also conveyed a misleading impression of the book's authors and our intentions.

By means of multiple quotations from Stephen J. Tonsor and vague references to medievalism, Catholicism, and the European Right, Mr. Himmelfarb portrays us as Catholic monarchists and our work as a polemical tract in defense of the Old Right. He will be surprised, no doubt, to learn that the book was written by a Protestant Jeffersonian (me) and a Jewish classical liberal who describes himself as a Robert Taft Republican (Paul Gottfried). In my own case, so far from being a defender of Catholic monarchism, I have explicitly rejected the utility of such views in the American context and have argued that the real conservative tradition in the U.S. is represented by Jefferson, Madison, and Tocqueville, all of whom give evidence of the American antipathy to state centralization and affection for local government and voluntary association. Their doctrine, like mine, recognized that political lib-

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erty did not rest upon the radical leveling of Robespierre but lay in all those intermediate institutions that protect individuals from the power of the state.

As a political theorist, I have put forward an outline of federalism that is rooted in American history and in the evidence provided by the social and biological sciences. In any number of editorials and articles I have defended the republican federalism of the U.S. against attacks both from European rightists and from liberals who would reduce our political heritage to procedural democracy. As a long-time defender of American liberties and responsible democracy, I fail to see how my position can be fairly characterized as "extra-American."

Mr. Himmelfarb gives the impression—perhaps unintentionally—that *The Conservative Movement* is a paleoconservative attack on the neoconservatives. Nothing could be further from the truth. Neoconservatism is only one of many topics we pursued, and we were equally critical of the shortcomings of the Old Right and the New Right. Indeed, we paid tribute—one that is well-deserved—to the works of neoconservative writers like Seymour Martin Lipset, James Q. Wilson, and Peter Berger. At the same time we criticized the Old Right for abandoning the intellectual arena and for closing its collective mind to empirical evidence.

We did our best to be fair to all parties, and if we did not always succeed in suppressing our own prejudices, it was not for lack of trying. It is no accident that our little book has gained praise and respect across the political spectrum: from liberals, leftists, paleoconservatives, and, yes, not a few neoconservatives.

The conservative alliance may well be unraveling, as Mr. Himmelfarb suggests. In our book we attempted to outline the conditions for unity, the most important of which is a respect for the diversity of background and opinion that has gone into the coalition.

THOMAS FLEMING
Editor, *Chronicles*
Rockford, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Dan Himmelfarb's attempt to make Thomas Fleming and Paul Gottfried's *The Conservative Movement* out to be a diatribe against neoconservatism leads him into errors of omission and fact. The book is a balanced and accurate survey of conservative trends in politics and research since World War II. . . . Neoconservatism is not singled out for special criticism. Indeed, it is praised more and criticized less than the Old Right.

I shall content myself with a sampling of errors.

1. . . . Mr. Himmelfarb quotes and analyzes Stephen J. Tonsor's statements as though they were those of Fleming and Gottfried. I was present when Tonsor told the Philadelphia Society that conservatism's "world view is Roman or Anglo-Catholic." The responses ranged from polite irony to open scorn. Most American conservatives are Protestants. . . .

2. Democracy is a sore point between conservatives and neoconservatives. Most conservatives are defenders of the Tenth Amendment. They believe in the people's right to determine taxes and enact regulatory laws, e.g., the death penalty, censorship, and abortion. Neoconservatives seem to defend a regime that has gerrymandered the House of Representatives so that there is virtually no turnover in that body and it is prevented from reflecting the changing will of the majority of Americans. Neoconservatives support a system in which judges allow the execution of innocent babies without the right of due process while giving mass murderers years to defend themselves. They favor a society run by bureaucrats and judges instead of one determined by the will of the majority. Then they talk about global democracy, which means imposing the same regime on other peoples, what A.E. Houseman (speaking of 19th-century France) called "the divine right of two million radicals to govern thirty million conservatives."

3. Conservatives are distrustful of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jesse Jackson because of their egalitarianism, according to Mr. Himmelfarb. In fact, what bothers conservatives is the presence of Hunter Pitts O'Dell, alias Jack O'Dell, alias J.H. O'Dell, on the staffs of both King and Jackson. His presence on King's staff also bothered President John F. Kennedy and his brother, the Attorney General. Egalitarianism has nothing to do with it.

4. "American conservatism," Mr. Himmelfarb writes, ". . . readily identifies itself as a medieval ten-

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dency." Naturally, he cites no reference, not even Tonsor, for this absurdity. Conservatives do believe that there are important aspects of the ancient and medieval worlds that are alive today. This would include the tradition of thinking that stretches from Homer through Plato and Aristotle and lives on in such diverse thinkers as Hans Gadamer, Stephen Clarke, and Alasdair MacIntyre. The ancient world saw the birth of representative government and the university. Does Mr. Himmelfarb reject these as medieval anachronisms? Conservatives are also interested in recent discoveries in the social and natural sciences to which *The Conservative Movement* devoted an entire chapter, a chapter on which Mr. Himmelfarb is mute, because it blows his entire thesis out of the water. . . .

E. CHRISTIAN KOPFF
Boulder, Colorado

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Dan Himmelfarb correctly observes that the "elders" of the neoconservative movement—Irving Kristol, Nathan Glazer, Norman Podhoretz, *et al.*—have spawned a second generation of writers, editors, and scholars. By the same token, . . . the paleoconservatives have some progeny as well. . . .

The Institute for Cultural Conservatism, an offshoot of Paul Weyrich's Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, has become a perch for some of the best and brightest of these young, traditional conservatives. ("Cultural conservative," it seems, is now a code word for "traditional conservative," a term that nowadays conjures up unpleasant images of hidebound, mossbacked old reactionaries railing against electricity, running water, and what Russell Kirk once called "the mechanical Jacobin"—i.e., the automobile.)

Mr. Himmelfarb's charge that the paleoconservatives are vaguely "isolationalist" and insufficiently vigorous in their anti-Communism . . . would be unfair if it were made against these younger cultural conservatives. William Lind, for example, has spent his career trying to help the U.S. military throw off the shackles of McNamara-era systems analysis, bureaucratization, and "managerialism." Defeating the Soviet army in Europe, he says, requires army officers who think and act like warriors—not technocrats. Such notions hardly sound like isolationism to me.

If Mr. Himmelfarb is interested in ferreting out real examples of isolationist sentiment among conservatives, I suggest he examine the writings of . . . CATO Institute libertarians (assuming for the sake of argument that libertarians are conservatives). Recent CATO publications advocate massive cuts in defense spending, a hands-off policy in Central America, an end to U.S. covert operations—in other words, the most vulgar sort of isolationism and anti-anti-Communism.

I also suggest that Mr Himmelfarb spend some time looking around his own neoconservative camp. For starters, Irving Kristol's attacks on our European allies, and his call for pulling our troops out of Europe—a move advocated by the Soviets for forty years, by the way—carry the unmistakable odor of neo-isolationism.

WILLIAM ROSENAU
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I began reading Dan Himmelfarb's "Conservative Splits" in the hope of finally finding a sympathetic, bridge-building article about the two main . . . camps in the conservative movement. While Mr. Himmelfarb cannot be blamed if he was distressed by those in the Old Right who have been less than generous toward neoconservatives, I am disappointed in his response.

He goes to what he sees as the heart of current conservative splits by contrasting Old Right and neoconservative views on the Founding Fathers and on original liberalism. . . . The Old Right in his view is inclined to agree with the Founding Fathers on grounds of their belief in natural law as a guiding principle, whereas neoconservatives agree more with the Founders' commitment to human freedom. In drawing this distinction, Mr. Himmelfarb depicts the Old Right as more interested in order and social hierarchy than in human rights. He claims that conservatives reject the ideals of liberalism while neoconservatives defend liberalism against McGovern (and, one presumes, Dukakis).

On the first matter, Mr. Himmelfarb just plain misses the point. A belief in human freedom springs directly from natural law. When the Declaration of Independence speaks of self-evident rights—i.e., certain fundamental rights that are completely consistent with the very design of humanity—it is reflecting the doctrine of natural law. Without it, the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights are just sets of ideas. Mr. Himmelfarb and I may think these ideas are very good, but on what basis are they superior to those of Marx and Lenin? In the final analysis, on the basis of natural law. This will explain why some conservatives opposed the form (though not the content) of civil-rights legislation. They feared that, while doing some good, such legislation could damage the structure on which constitutional guarantees of human rights hinge. That today we have "rights" being enumerated and doled out to bureaucratically defined groups with no legitimacy other than the political pressures of the moment (the very opposite of inherent rights as defined by natural law), indicates that they may have been right.

This leads to the second point. There *was* something wrong with liberalism. The good intentions but heavy-handed methods of the 1950's and especially the 1960's led to the McGovernism of the 1970's and 1980's. Affirmative action and the welfare state are obvious examples which I believe most neoconservatives recognize. Neoconservatives are *conservatives* precisely because they maintain the ideals of liberalism but have recognized the flaws in the liberal program which later led to so much abuse. Old Right conservatives recognized these flaws earlier, perhaps, but are no less motivated by a belief in liberty. Certainly, to intimate that those present-day conservatives who draw on the Old Right tradition, such as William F. Buckley, Jr., George Gilder, and Jack Kemp, are somehow less than impassioned advocates of human freedom and equality of opportunity is, on the face of it, absurd.

So what *is* the difference between Old Right conservatism and neoconservatism? Well, neoconservatives are, essentially, ethnically different from Old Right conservatives in a loose way. The Old Right seems more comfortable with the old school tie and is more likely to come from a long line of Republicans. The neoconservative used to be a Democrat and probably has an

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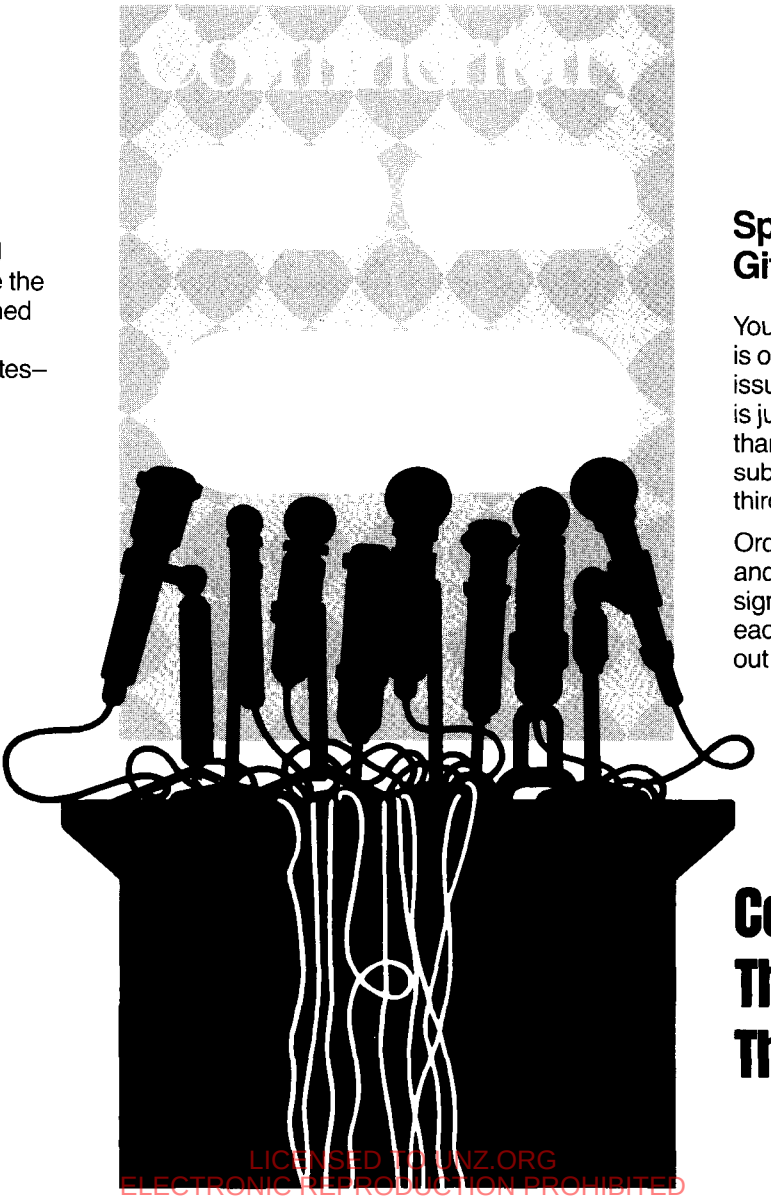

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immigrant background. As a prep-school teacher who grew up Italian on Long Island, I find myself straddling these two worlds and find that the actual philosophical differences are not very great. I read COMMENTARY and *National Review* avidly—and do not ask me to choose between them.

That some on the Old Right scorn neoconservatives as "Johnnies-come-lately" strikes me as boorish. That a few neoconservatives feel the need to respond in kind is unfortunate. I am afraid Mr. Himmelfarb's article made no constructive contribution to the ongoing dialogue among conservatives. It can only give comfort to our real enemies, who today are mainly on the Left and are contemptuous of both natural law *and* human freedom—as one would expect them to be.

KENNETH CECIRE
Pawling, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Dan Himmelfarb distinguishes between traditional conservatives and neoconservatives in terms of their respective predilections for political systems: he sees the former (quite properly) as favoring belief, hierarchy, and prescription, while the latter are held to espouse "democracy." Although this dichotomy is conceptually interesting, the difference between the two groups is obscured in practice by the foreign policy articulated by the neoconservatives in relation to the Third World.

The point is clearest at the present time in the context of Central America. One finds Jeane Kirkpatrick, Norman Podhoretz, Mark Falcoff, and other good neoconservatives—without observable dissent—waxing righteously indignant at the real or chimerical shortcomings of the current Nicaraguan government. But while justifying the Reagan administration's war on that hapless society in the name of "democracy," these would-be democratizers are, curiously, not on record as having evinced notable moral qualms about that country's previous regime. How does one explain this? Two alternatives suggest themselves: either the neoconservatives cynically wave the flag of democracy to legitimize the U.S. government's pretensions to total regional hegemony, or else, more sinisterly, the nature of the Sozoma regime is consistent with their vision of democracy.

Two considerations lend support to the latter thesis. The first is the neoconservatives' persistent use of the word "restore" to describe the nature of their democratic undertaking: one cannot restore a condition that did not previously exist. The second is their tendency to characterize the political system as a mere administrative process, devoid of broader social, economic, or even political ramifications. . . .

One might add that it was precisely the fear that ordinary citizens might not embrace this interpretation . . . and, seduced by the naive popular conception of democracy as "government by and for the people," might mobilize politically to demand their share of social rights, that caused Samuel Huntington to forecast "the crisis of democracy." He stressed that "democracy requires some measure of apathy and noninvolvevement on the part of the masses." In this light, one can understand the neoconservatives' longing to reestablish the institution of democracy in Nicaragua as well as their ability to see it prospering now in Guatemala and El Salvador, regimes that only the most hypercritical of traditional conservatives could fault for their pandering to the popular will. . . .

JOHN W. BARCHFIELD
Universidad de Guanajuato
Guanajuato, Mexico

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his balanced and insightful analysis of the conservative movement, Dan Himmelfarb notes that a high proportion of younger conservatives are likely to classify themselves as neoconservatives rather than traditional conservatives. . . . If we examine more carefully two causes for that contemporary pattern we will better understand why it may unfortunately take a while before we see significant numbers of young intellectuals committed to traditional conservatism.

First, as Mr. Himmelfarb properly observes, traditional conservatism is rather closely tied to formal religion, so that intellectuals sincerely sympathetic to it are implicitly obligated to become publicly observant. They need not be devout, but they must display public commitment to a system of traditional rites—rather like patriots paying their taxes. But many younger intellectuals have been raised in environments of nonbelief . . . so that it is hard for them to accept this key component of traditional conservatism. . . .

Second, there is a notable paucity of traditional conservatives in contemporary academia. . . . Mr. Himmelfarb properly cites Russell Kirk as a spokesman for traditional conservatism, but Kirk, to take him as an example, was never offered a position in any prominent academic institution, despite his enormous productivity and relative intellectual influence. . . . By contrast, many neoconservatives have managed to attain positions in higher education and other appropriate enclaves. This means that serious graduate students pass through academia with only remote contacts with traditional conservatism. It is no surprise that they are unconverted; they have never been preached to. . . .

Mr. Himmelfarb's article emphasizes the importance of the traditional liberal commitment to equality over the conservative's acceptance of the inevitability of certain forms of inequality. But speaking from the area of my own research—elementary and secondary education—it seems to me that one of the most profound problems now confronting education is the maintenance of moderate efficiency in the face of persisting and strident demands that the system generate equal results. Thus, even the courageous Secretary of Education William J. Bennett has proposed that American high schools impose his highly academic model curriculum on all students—regardless of their evident capabilities. . . . Bennett, as a true neoconservative, simply cannot admit that some pupils are not as able as others, and never will be. But such urgent demands for reflexive equality make it impossible to conduct productive discussions about school reform. The instinctual liberal sympathy for equality puts all of the burdens of realism on the traditional conservatives.

Finally, I would offer another perspective on Mr. Himmelfarb's mild suggestion that neoconservatives and traditional conservatives differ partly along Jewish/Christian lines. Recently, in one of my graduate classes, I had the pleasure of instructing the most able student sympathetic to traditional values I have ever met. This student, an Orthodox Jew who wore hasidic

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dress, had as his most congenial colleague in the class a teacher/baseball coach from a traditional Catholic boys' high school. . . .

In sum, the lines of the division are not so much Jewish/Christian as religious/secular (and I use the term "religious" not in any formal sense but rather to mean a recognition of the importance of the sacred in human life, and a willingness to find ways to facilitate its reinvigoration in our society). As Nathan Glazer once suggested, we should be moving toward a new form of concordat. Perhaps both neoconservatives and traditional conservatives can cooperate to help foster such a movement.

EDWARD A. WYNNE
University of Illinois
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . As a political rather than an intellectual conservative, I have viewed the Old Right's attitude of exclusivity with concern. The contemporary rise of conservatism in our nation . . . did not come about through the efforts of the Stephen J. Tonsors and Paul Gottfrieds. It came about through the unceasing struggle of the political Right, not the least element of which was the New York Conservative party. In 1966, we gave the Liberal party its first major setback by pushing it off Row C on the ballot. In 1970, we accomplished the almost impossible by electing a conservative, James Buckley, to the U.S. Senate on the Conservative line. By 1980, we were able to elect a conservative to the presidency. . . .

We accomplished this by reaching out and welcoming all who were interested in conserving our free society, our Constitution, our cherished traditions, our precious religions, and our beloved country. And we welcomed the neoconservatives, for here were people who perhaps knew our enemies better than we did. . . .

The Old Right has performed an invaluable service by keeping the flame burning. It must, however, recognize that the flame is now being fed and nurtured and carried forward by others as well.

BENTON COLE
New York County Conservative Party
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Dan Himmelfarb's interesting polemic on conservative splits could, I believe, be simplified by calling paleoconservatives reactionaries, and anti-anti-Communists and their academic cohorts, radicals. I myself, falling into the neoconservative category, find it more comfortable to be addressed as a Gladstonian liberal.

DANIEL SPICEHANDLER
New York City

DAN HIMMELFARB writes:

Thomas Fleming suggests that I portrayed the book he wrote with Paul Gottfried as a "polemical tract." And E. Christian Kopff thinks I consider *The Conservative Movement* to be a "diatribe against neoconservatism." I find this choice of language very curious. For in the third paragraph of my essay I state that "the authors of *The Conservative Movement* are considerably more evenhanded and less polemical in their treatment of neoconservatism than previous Old Right observers have been," and add that Messrs. Fleming and Gottfried are "subtly critical" of neoconservatism. I do not think these words are inconsistent with Mr. Fleming's claim that he and Gottfried were being "fair," or with Mr. Kopff's protestation that the book is "balanced."

Mr. Fleming insists that *The Conservative Movement* was not meant to be an attack on neoconservatism. What the authors' intentions were I have no way of knowing. Their words, however, are clear. And the message that the reader gets is that Messrs. Gottfried and Fleming do not much care for neoconservatives.

Others have drawn the same conclusion—and use language stronger than mine. Writing in *National Review*, Chilton Williamson, Jr. describes *The Conservative Movement* as a "polite, controlled diatribe against the neoconservatives and the warping effect they have had on American conservatism." In his *Religion and Society Report*, Richard John Neuhaus says that "Fleming and Gottfried are decidedly ambivalent (to put it gently) toward the neoconservatives"; the authors, according to

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Neuhaus, think neoconservatives are "not to be trusted." And no less an authority on American conservatism than George H. Nash makes a similar observation in *Policy Review*. *The Conservative Movement*, writes Nash, represents a lament over the fact that "the intellectual leadership of the conservative cause, and much of its financial base, [has been] captured by neoconservatives." Gottfried and Fleming's book, adds Nash, is an "uncompromising, scholarly jeremiad from the perspective of the traditionalist 'Old Right.' " Each of these reviews, incidentally, is generally favorable.

One of my many "errors," according to Mr. Kopff, is a misinterpretation of the Old Right's attitude toward Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jesse Jackson. My argument, essentially, is this: neoconservatives are respectful of King but not of Jackson, because the former was a liberal while the latter is not; paleoconservatives view Jackson and King as proponents of "equality," and hence are suspicious of both men. Mr. Kopff thinks that what these men actually believe is irrelevant; the presence on their staffs of someone with Communist associations is enough to disqualify them both. If Mr. Kopff is accurately portraying the Old Right's position—if the company a man keeps is really thought to be more important than the principles he espouses—then neoconservatives and paleoconservatives have far less in common than I originally suggested.

Elsewhere in his letter Mr. Kopff argues as follows: it is patently wrong to associate the Old Right with the Middle Ages; and besides, what's so bad about the Middle Ages? Thus, he characterizes my assertion that the Old Right is a "medieval tendency" as an "absurdity," but immediately adds that "there are important aspects of the ancient and medieval worlds that are alive today"—representative government and the university, for example. What Mr. Kopff does not say is that there are also important aspects of the ancient and medieval worlds that are *not* alive today—at least not in Western democracies. These include a rigid class system, hereditary rule, a feudal economy, religious persecution, and slavery. The decline of these institutions coincides with the rise of liberal democracy—a form of government of which paleoconservatives are less enthusiastic advocates.

William Rosenau questions my contention that the Old Right is isolationist, presenting as counterevidence Paul Weyrich's hawkish Institute for Cultural Conservatism. In doing so, Mr. Rosenau confuses the Old Right with the New, within whose camp Weyrich and his foundation fall. I did not suggest in my essay that the New Right is isolationist—in fact, I did not even mention the New Right. Mr. Rosenau's claim that the New Right is the "progeny" of the Old Right, moreover, is an arguable one. For the New Right and the Old Right have fundamental differences: the New Right is a populist and ultra-democratic tendency, while the Old Right is "elitist" and vaguely anti-democratic; the Old Right is suspicious of mass society, while the New Right glorifies the masses; the Old Right considers the New Right to be rather simple-minded and vulgar, while the New Right regards the Old Right as pretentious and stuffy. (Paul Gottfried, writing in the *Intercollegiate Review*, describes the New Right as "a lowbrow imitation of what the Old Right represents," and adds that the New Right has "little of the intellectual sophistication" of the Old Right.) Mr. Rosenau is no doubt correct in portraying the New Right as forthrightly anti-Communist, but his claim does not refute my point about Old Right isolationism.

As for libertarians, I readily concede that many are isolationist. The "anarcho-capitalist" Murray Rothbard, in fact, is not merely isolationist; he has argued that the United States is solely responsible for the cold war. But not all libertarians share his view. The libertarian icon Ayn Rand was a steadfast anti-Communist; she described the Soviet Union and Cuba as "slave pens," which free countries have the "right to invade." Libertarians divide into two distinct foreign-policy camps: the interventionists, who recognize that Communism is the enemy of capitalism (and individual liberty); and the isolationists, who think taxation and conscription represent a greater threat than totalitarianism.

The isolationism of the Old Right is of a different kind. Unlike neoconservatives, who think the dividing line in world politics lies between freedom and unfreedom, paleoconservatives see the fundamental political conflict as a battle between religion and irreligion. And with respect to belief in a "transcendent moral order," liberal democracy and Communism differ only in degree: one is less secular than the other. (In a review of Sidney Hook's autobiography in *Chronicles*, Paul Gottfried suggests that "the theoretical battle between Hook and the Communists may be seen as one over instruments and procedures." In other words, the differences between the Communists, on the one hand, and the man who is perhaps the foremost liberal democrat of the 20th century, on the other, is merely a difference of emphasis.) Paleoconservatives think that checking totalitarianism abroad is less important than restoring religious belief at home. Hence the Old Right's less than wholehearted anti-Communism.

The isolationism of the Old Right, in fact, is similar to that of the New Left: who are we to tell the world how to behave, when our own house is not in order? Both New Left and Old Right deny that liberal democracy should be held up as a model for other countries—the New Left because liberal democracy is fundamentally exploitative and unjust, the Old Right because it is fundamentally secular and egalitarian.

As for Irving Kristol's alleged isolationism, I will say only that his differences with Mr. Rosenau appear to be over strategic particulars rather than first principles; I do not think it is necessary to provide an elaborate vindication of a man who has devoted the better part of his life to the intellectual defense of liberal democracy. That neoconservatives as a group are serious about Communist totalitarianism should be obvious to the most casual reader of COMMENTARY.

Kenneth Cecire's argument that the principles of the Declaration of Independence can serve as common ground for neoconservatives and paleoconservatives has at least one flaw: the Old Right is not particularly fond of the Declaration. Indeed, reading the Declaration out of the American Founding has been a continuing project of the Old Right. The paleoconservative view is that the Declaration was a work of propaganda, written in order to enlist the support of France in general, and the French *philosophes* in particular, for the cause of the Revolution.

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Mr. Cecire reads both COMMENTARY and *National Review*, and is unwilling to "choose between them"; he finds that "the actual philosophical differences" between neoconservatives and paleoconservatives are "not very great." This argument, too, resting as it does on the implicit premise that neoconservatism is to paleoconservatism as COMMENTARY is to *National Review*, has at least one flaw: *National Review* is no longer a journal of the Old Right.

In the 50's and 60's, many of *National Review*'s contributors wrote from the perspective of the anti-democratic European Right; today most of its contributors argue in behalf of liberal democracy. Thus *National Review* has recently published obituaries for the social-democratic civil-rights activist Bayard Rustin and the liberal anti-apartheid writer Alan Paton. Both men were anti-Communist, but it is unlikely that either would have been eulogized by the *National Review* of old. *National Review* has even changed its position on Israel (it has gone from moderately anti- to fairly consistently pro-). This shift has not gone unnoticed by the Old Right. Discussing democracy and the state of intellectual discourse in a recent issue of *Chronicles*, Thomas Fleming (unfavorably) contrasts the current situation, in which the concept of democracy is virtually immune to criticism, with that of twenty-five years ago, when "European rightists and their American disciples subjected democracy to a withering attack from their redoubt at *National Review*." And Paul Gottfried offers the following lament in the *Intercollegiate Review*: "One rarely finds evidence of [the Old Right's] imprint any more in *National Review*, which has grown into an inferior version of COMMENTARY."

Mr. Cecire thinks that by giving "comfort to our real enemies, who today are mainly on the Left," I have done a disservice to conservatism. I do not deny that the enemies are now primarily on the Left—in fact, I make this very point in my article. Nevertheless, I refuse to concede that anybody who is called (or calls himself) a conservative is *ipso facto* a friend. If I have done harm to the "conservative movement," I apologize; but making friends with conservatives, in my opinion, is a less worthy objective than defending liberal democracy. And in the battle between liberal democrats and their enemies, the Old Right is less than a dependable ally.

I do not think it is correct, incidentally, to include Jack Kemp among "those present-day conservatives who draw on the Old Right tradition." Kemp is a protégé of Irving Kristol, and takes much of his foreign-policy advice from Jeane Kirkpatrick.

John W. Barchfield accuses neoconservatives of hypocrisy: on the one hand, they claim to be democrats; on the other hand, they are loath to condemn (non-democratic) authoritarian regimes, even while displaying unmitigated hostility toward Communism. That it is not inconsistent for a liberal democrat to be less critical of authoritarian than of totalitarian regimes has been demonstrated by Jeane Kirkpatrick in her well-known article in these pages ("Dictatorships and Double Standards," November 1979). Let me recapitulate some of the major points of her argument. First, authoritarian governments are more prone to liberalization and democratization than their totalitarian counterparts. Second, stepping aside and allowing revolutionaries to overturn an authoritarian government virtually guarantees the ascent of a government that is far more inimical to freedom and democracy. Third, insofar as authoritarian regimes tend to be pro-American, and insofar as America is a democratic world power, authoritarian governments are on the side of democracy.

Neoconservatives do not think that authoritarianism equals democracy. But in the real (as opposed to the ideal) world, in which the alternatives in most situations are not good and better but bad and worse, the choice between a non-liberal, non-democratic regime and an anti-liberal, anti-democratic regime is not a difficult one.

Edward A. Wynne suggests that the "lines of division" between paleoconservatives and neoconservatives are "religious/secular," where "religious" means "a recognition of the importance of the sacred in human life, and a willingness to identify ways to facilitate its reinvigoration in our society." I am not sure that this is the proper way to think about the differences between the two groups, inasmuch as there are few neoconservatives who would deny the "importance of the sacred," or would be unwilling to "facilitate its reinvigoration." The

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differences between paleoconservatives and neoconservatives is not so much a difference between religion and secularism as a difference in their understanding of the relation between religion and politics.

For the Old Right, religious belief is a political principle; paleoconservatives are most comfortable with those political orders of which religion is a fundamental feature. Neoconservatives, by contrast, defend an essentially secular politics: while they are likely to acknowledge that religious belief is a prerequisite for the maintenance of a free society, they also consider a line of demarcation between religion and politics to be a central component of a liberal polity. There is no necessary connection between one's religious views and one's politics: a religiously orthodox person may be a political liberal, and a nonreligious person may be a political traditionalist.

Finally, like Daniel Spicehandler, I prefer to think of myself as a liberal. Unfortunately, that term no longer has the connotations it once had. Thus the far-Left Institute for Policy Studies is called a "liberal think-tank," and the far-Left *Nation* is a "liberal weekly." At the same time, those who defend the principles of liberalism are regularly identified as "conservatives"—or even "right-wingers." Which is all the more reason for determining what an individual really believes before deciding whether he is friend or foe.

One Book

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

My profoundest thanks to you, and to Daniel Fuchs, for "Three Books" [June]. Two of the books were completely new to me, and I shall try and find out more about them. The third, I suspect, may be not *Silberstein* (as Mr. Fuchs has it) but *Silbermann*, by Jacques de Lacretelle, a novel which had some impact at the time. My copy was published in 1922 in the *Editions de la Nouvelle Revue Française* and is described on the title page as the 37th edition. This is the first time I have heard the book mentioned since I bought and read it, as an eager graduate student in Paris, some fifty years ago.

BERNARD LEWIS
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

On reading Daniel Fuchs's "Three Books," I was reminded of a book which I read some forty years ago and which left a remarkably strong impression on my memory. This book, entitled *Silbermann*, was written by the French novelist Jacques de Lacretelle and was published in 1922. An English translation appeared the following year. Silbermann, the protagonist of the book, is an intelligent and ambitious Jewish boy who faces an uncertain future in an anti-Semitic French society in the years following the Dreyfus affair. In many (though not all) respects *Silbermann* appears to resemble Mr. Fuchs's long-sought *Silberstein*, and I wonder if they might not in fact be one and the same.

GASTON L. SCHMIR
Hamden, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Daniel Fuchs's nostalgic article stirred my own nostalgia, and I recalled giving a lecture back in the 1950's on Ludwig Lewisohn's *Three Tales and a Play about Jews*. One of those books was *Silbermann* (not *Silberstein*), written by Jacques de Lacretelle (a member of the French Academy). . . . The other works included in Lewisohn's book were Thomas Mann's "Tamar" (an episode from his *Joseph the Provider*), "The Alien Corn" (from Somerset Maugham's *First Person Singular*), and John Galsworthy's Loyalties."

Part of my conclusion in that lecture was the following: "The Jew who tries to forget that he is a Jew will discover that he is neither Jew nor Gentile. He will merely realize that he is a man without a spiritual home—shunned by all, wanted by none. The Jew who does not want to be a Jew will eventually become a spiritual leper. That is the lesson we learn from this collection.". . .

MILTON BIRNBAUM
American International College
Springfield, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Consider this a footnote to Daniel Fuchs's article, "Three Books," in which he describes the influence Adolph Gillis had upon him when he was a student at Eastern District High School in Brooklyn.

Like Mr. Fuchs, I was editor of Eastern District's student publication, *Gold and White* (successor to the *Daisy*) while Mr. Gillis was faculty adviser. Although this was nearly a decade after Mr. Fuchs graduated, I can assure him that Mr. Gillis often referred to him with pride, perhaps as a model worthy of my emulation.

Mr. Gillis left Eastern District during the time I was there to become chairman of the English department at another high school. Subsequently, he was appointed principal of an elementary school in Brooklyn. He eventually retired to Middletown, New York and, the last I heard, was in failing health.

I too have not forgotten Mr. Gillis. I still have an inscribed copy of his *Ludwig Lewisohn: The Artist and His Message*, a critical biography of the brilliant, though nearly forgotten, novelist and scholar.

LAWRENCE FEIGENBAUM
Kingsborough Community College
Brooklyn, New York

DANIEL FUCHS writes:

What kind, forbearing readers COMMENTARY has. Lawrence Feigenbaum's reminiscence and news were most welcome, unexpected. To the others, for their own warm recollections of the French novel and the time, and for correcting me, ever so gently, my appreciative thanks.

I have to ask your readers' indulgence again. In my article, I said Ralph Sipper, the Santa Barbara rare-book dealer, told me Barbellion's *The Journal of a Disappointed Man* was out of print. I now see from the anthology *Rediscoveries II* (which includes my essay) that there have been "recent expensive reprints from Gordon Press and Century Bookbinding," and that there is a paperback edition from Salem House (1984).

The misstatement is mine, not Mr. Sipper's, due to a misunderstanding on my part of a telephone conversation with him that took place when I was getting the piece together, about a year ago. I owe him an apology.

Arms Control

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mary Tedeschi Eberstadt argues in "Arms Control and Its Casualties" [April] that the administration could not coherently proceed with arms-control negotiations with the Soviet Union and actively try to replace the Marxist government of Nicaragua at the same

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time. She further believes that in order to be credible in its negotiations, . . . the administration withheld active support of Colonel Oliver North and the *contra* cause when North's dramatic battle on the witness stand provided an extraordinary opportunity for such support. The Soviet Union of course had no trouble whatsoever . . . in arming Nicaragua while at the same time negotiating nuclear arms control with the U.S.; quite the opposite.

But . . . is Mrs. Eberstadt's explanation of the administration's calculation accurate, or was it just another expression of the curious double-bind which wafts like a malady from Foggy Bottom, whatever the administration? . . .

Another endemic problem in the State Department, even among its most resolute professionals, is the view that the formulation of strategy is a moral and intellectual enterprise separate from the domestic political war entailed in gaining power to carry out foreign-policy actions. By her own words, an American response in Nicaragua was foreclosed by Congress and abetted by the media. . . . Against these adversaries, and society's unwholesome appetite for scandal, the administration fought—and lost. Nonetheless, Mrs. Eberstadt calls our disastrous retreats in Central America an instance of the administration's—and the President's—failure. . . .

P.K. BUSKIRK
Corte Madera, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The logic behind Mary Tedeschi Eberstadt's article on the "casualties" of arms control is curious. In her view, the desire for arms agreements with the Soviets seems to be the cause of just about every "failed" Reagan administration foreign-policy initiative—the alleged altar on which the Reagan revolution has been sacrificed. . . . She seems to be saying that the damage caused by the Iran-*contra* affair was not in its exposure of crass hypocrisy in a foreign policy conducted by reckless amateurs. Rather, it was the pursuit of arms control which caused Iran-*contra* to damage America's reputation in the world at large.

Mrs. Eberstadt . . . misses the point. She assumes Soviet involvement in most regional trouble spots, and to a certain extent this seems accurate. But she then assumes that the way to improve relations with the Soviet Union is through the inflexible support of any government or revolutionary movement that declares itself anti-Communist, whatever its behavior. . . . The Soviets will then be convinced of our determination and come to the bargaining table.

But isn't this what Reagan has done? Was not even the disgraceful sale of arms to Iranian terrorists motivated by a consistent anti-Communism—the desire to keep Iran from falling behind the iron curtain after Khomeini dies?

Arms control appeals to the Soviets' perception of their own self-interest, or they would not be negotiating, and there is nothing wrong with this. Arms control is seen as a way of reducing the risk of nuclear war, and this is certainly also in America's interest. . . .

Perhaps Mrs. Eberstadt should look at her evidence a little differently. Arms control reflects, as well as helps develop, a lessening of tensions between the superpowers. It also improves the climate for solving regional problems.

BRUCE BRAGER
Arlington, Virginia

MARY TEDESCHI EBERSTADT writes:

P.K. Buskirk is quite right to observe that the pressure for arms negotiation "wafts like a malady . . . whatever the administration." He is right, too, in pointing out the Congress's particular responsibility for our "disastrous retreats" in Central America, a judgment with which my article concurs. We differ only in our assessments of what the Reagan administration could have accomplished given the pressures Mr. Buskirk describes. He seems to feel that the failure of the *contra* policy and the rise of détente were foregone conclusions in a Washington routinely enchanted by U.S.-Soviet negotiations. My view is rather that the Reagan administration imposed additional pressures on itself by choosing to pursue particularly ambitious arms proposals and by subordinating its other initiatives to détente and its many demands.

My purpose in writing was to show how those demands served to undercut important policies—such as anti-terrorism and aid to various resistance groups—that were founded on a less benign view of Soviet ambitions than the view required by détente. Bruce Brager's letter is an example in miniature

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of exactly this sort of transformation. I wish, first, to correct his assumption that "the disgraceful sale of arms to Iranian terrorists" was motivated by "the desire to keep Iran from falling behind the iron curtain after Khomeini dies." As confirmed most recently in the memoirs of former officials, though by no means only there, the overture toward Iran was born of a personal concern for the hostages which overwhelmed all else after the President saw a videotape of the torture of CIA station chief William Buckley. That decision, as I argued, dealt only the most visible blow to a policy that was already floundering under the weight of the Daniloff-Zakharov exchange—one made possible in turn by an anti-terrorism policy which had long since sacrificed its concern for Soviet-sponsored terrorism to the etiquette of détente.

Mr. Brager's more interesting objection is his assertion that "arms control . . . improves the climate for solving regional problems." Here stands a naked version of the ideas that have helped to make the battlefields of Nicaragua, Angola, Cambodia, and Afghanistan what they are today. One of the perennial attractions of détente lies precisely in its suggestion that the United States need no longer trouble itself with these and other Soviet-fueled wars or with the plight of the men and women subjected to them. By transforming clear-cut cases of Communist aggression into "problems" to be "solved," like so many crossword puzzles, by the mutually concerned East and West, the United States unwittingly legitimates the Soviet decision to expand its influence into such territories in the first place. Thus the "solution" for Nicaragua, for example, becomes the entrenchment of a Soviet-aligned Communist regime rather than its replacement by any genuinely independent, indigenous contenders. By such willful neglect of the facts do we reward the Soviet Union for opportunistic aggression and deny the legitimacy of efforts to deter or overcome belligerent acts.

The Grand March

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Art, Kitsch & Politics" [May], John P. Sisk raises the question of whether Milan Kundera is an incarnation of the devil. Mr. Sisk believes that insofar as Kundera aligns himself with the Grand March of anti-kitsch, he is the devil. Although Mr. Sisk backs away from any risky conclusion, refusing to say how far Kundera goes along with the Grand March, . . . he nevertheless lumps him with the devil and other hated relativists like Paul de Man, and tosses them, along with all of their difficult philosophy, into the dustbin of useless paradox, so that all of us residents of the "viable community" can get back to business and Disneyland.

This is unfair to Kundera, who is in danger of being coopted by the anti-Communists, if only he would write the way . . . [they] want, namely, by making the moral distinction between East and West so very plain that all can nod their heads in complete, sleepy agreement. Instead, Kundera takes pleasure in noticing the similarities between East and West, in their aptitude for self-righteousness and in their appreciation of kitsch. This is much the spirit of the chapter entitled "The Grand March" in Kundera's novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.

Kundera is a novelist at heart who writes novels to create characters and to ask tough questions, not to make obvious moral distinctions between two imperfect systems of government. As Kundera said in an interview with Alain Finkielkraut:

> The novelistic exercise consists in creating characters. Therefore it is a confrontation between different value systems, between different visions of the world; it is a reconstruction of the substantial relativity of the human world, of that rich, enigmatic, and marvelous relativity which is constantly being negated by the ideological spirit and its single form of truth.

Vigilance against kitsch preserves the "marvelous relativity" of our existence and prevents the death of beauty by refusing to define it. If we are to lessen the influence of kitsch, we must be rid of certainty and its pretension, not, as Mr. Sisk assumes, be rid of beauty and the attempt to grasp it.

But what if, like Sabina, one of the main characters in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, we take this vigilance to extremes? . . . Kundera is the first to see the self-destructive tendency of light types like Sabina who place kitsch first among enemies. . . . We do not leave the novel convinced that Sabina is right. We do not want to march with her. We admire her critical ability, yet we recoil from her betrayal, her isolation, her unbearable lightness.

To say outright, or in so many convoluted words, that Kundera is . . . the devil marching grandly against kitsch is to discount his commitment to relativity and juxtaposition, and ultimately to discount his commitment to the novel. As Kundera said to Philip Roth in a 1980 interview printed in the New York *Times Book Review*:

> I invent stories, confront one with another, and by this means I ask questions. The stupidity of people comes from having an answer for everything. The wisdom of the novel comes from having a question for everything.

It is fair to allow Kundera more distance from Sabina and the Grand March of anti-kitsch than Mr. Sisk allows. It is also fair to allow the distaste for kitsch greater latitude than Mr. Sisk does when he calls it a moral imperative against all high-flying eagles.

ERIC GRAVLEY

Dallas, Texas

JOHN P. SISK writes:

When Eric Gravley says that I raise and then back away from the question of whether Milan Kundera is in league with the devil, he is overreading my use of Leszek Kolakowski's essay, "Politics and the Devil." The point is that the devil conceived as counselor of perfection and exploiter of our yearning for innocence helps to put Kundera's admirable metaphor of the Grand March in a broader context—one in which moral, political, and aesthetic problems become just as complex as Mr. Gravley apparently prefers to see them. To say that Kundera or anyone else gets pinched in that context (and few of us can escape being pinched) is not to imply that he is in league with the devil—unless one believes that simply to be alive in a condition short of angelic puts one in league with the devil.

I suspect, however, that Mr. Gravley is put off more by my failure to appreciate Kundera's "marvelous relativity," one manifestation of which is the latter's refusal to make the easy moral distinction between East and West that the anti-Communists demand. As I think I made clear, I would

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much prefer that Kundera had made that distinction, even at the risk of getting sleepy agreement from some nodding heads. Orwell and Koestler were able to do this without "being negated by the ideological spirit and its single form of truth." To be afraid to make obvious distinctions between two imperfect forms of government (are there perfect forms?), especially when the distinction is so crucial to the freedom of the artist to enjoy the marvelous relativity of his existence, is to risk being left with little protection against the organizers of Grand Marches, who are anything but relativists. In fact, it is their ideological absolutism that helps foster the belief that a viable and safe counterposition can be established without absolutes—that one can be, as Mr. Gravley conceives Kundera to be, a relativist and still ask tough questions.

The problem for the relativist who wants to ask tough questions is that the very toughness of his questions is likely to make him sound unrelativistically absolute. I suppose this is my way of saying that Kundera is not as much a relativist to me as he is to Mr. Gravley. If he were, he would not be a very good novelist. In my essay I questioned some of his absolutes, not the fact that he has absolutes.

Doris Lessing

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I would like to point out a few mistakes in Daniel Pipes's review of Doris Lessing's book on Afghanistan, *The Wind Blows Away Our Words* [Books in Review, May].

1. Mr. Pipes claims that the book is not "a firsthand account of the Afghan resistance," as advertised on the cover, because Mrs. Lessing went only to Pakistan. But in fact, the headquarters and temporary homes of the Afghan resistance are in Pakistan, and these were the places she visited.

2. Mr. Pipes is completely offbase in his comments on Mrs. Lessing's description of the "heroic postures" of the Afghan guerrillas. . . . The correct interpretation of her words is simply that she is trying to show that the Afghans are innocent of public relations. . . .

3. Mr. Pipes cites Mrs. Lessing's discussion of the spying tactics of KhAD, the Afghan secret police, in Peshawar and contrasts it with an account in another book of KhAD torture chambers within Afghanistan. He wants to paint Mrs. Lessing as ignorant and harmful to her cause by virtue of her failure to portray the enemy as black enough. Unfortunately, he must not have read the "Interview with Mrs. Tajwar Kakar" which makes up Part Three of her book. There he will find an eyewitness account of just what he claims is not in the book.

4. Mrs. Lessing makes a point which Mr. Pipes neglects to mention: that Gorbachev's policies are a Trojan horse. . . . She is warning that what has happened to Afghanistan is also being planned for England, and the rest of the West. The purpose of the book is to wake people up. It seems to have failed with Mr. Pipes. . . .

One additional comment: there is a political theme which runs through many of Mrs. Lessing's novels; *The Golden Notebook* and *The Good Terrorist* are examples. Her theme is that the truth about Communism is *worse* than what the Right says it is. What turns seemingly normal, middle-class people into advocates of civil war and mass murder is not an outgrowth of the kind of issues debated in political journals, but comes from the darkest depths of tortured souls. She is covering the same territory as Dostoevsky. It shows a severe lack of knowledge for Mr. Pipes to criticize Doris Lessing for being an ex-Communist who is still on the Left when she has been using her knowledge of Communism and the Left to launch devastating attacks with deadly aim upon the heart of the Communist deceit. She reaches people who would not be caught dead reading a political essay. That she has written a polemic should not be held against her. It was once respectable for writers to produce political pamphlets. I see no reason to attack "instant books" just because one does not like the contents.

My final question is, if Mr. Pipes found *The Wind Blows Away Our Words* to be too short, why didn't he at least read it all?

PETER E. SUTHERLAND
Scotia, New York

DANIEL PIPES writes:

Peter E. Sutherland relies on that old chestnut—accusing the reviewer of not reading the book in question. I can assure Mr. Sutherland that I did slog through the whole of *The Wind Blows Away Our Words*, and if he cares to come to my house in Philadelphia, it will be my privilege to show him that the marginal markings in my copy of the book run the whole way through.

I shall briefly deal with Mr. Sutherland's numbered points:

1. Doris Lessing's claim that her visit to Peshawar, Pakistan constitutes a "firsthand account of the Afghan resistance" strikes me as false advertising—like visiting Cape Canaveral and billing it as a "firsthand account of the moon."

2. The passage in *The Wind Blows Away Our Words* that accuses the Afghans of "heroic postures" bothers me because it suggests that their behavior is designed to appeal to a Western audience. This is both insulting and inaccurate—despite Mr. Sutherland's best efforts to improve the passage through reinterpretation.

3. Mr. Sutherland should direct not me but the author to read the interview at the end of the book. Had Mrs. Lessing paid more attention to this testimony, she might have taken KhAD more seriously.

4. "The purpose of the book is to wake people up," writes Mr. Sutherland. Exactly so, and that is precisely why I expressed regret over Mrs. Lessing's weak performance. Mr. Sutherland believes that I don't "like the contents," but the real problem is that I find the book inadequate. I opened *The Wind Blows Away Our Words* with the hope that a major novelist had written the account that would render the Afghan tragedy intelligible to the general public. Instead, I found a thin, inaccurate, and even silly book. My criticism reflects my disappointment.

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The Coming of Custodial Democracy

Charles Murray

IT IS by now taken for granted that the nation is about to turn to the Left in domestic policy. "Reaganism is finished, bankrupt, used up, over," wrote Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in the Washington *Post* this past May. At the time he foresaw a squeaker in the November presidential election and then a liberal phase of the political cycle coming "full flood" in the early 1990's.

Schlesinger is one of many saying roughly the same thing, although not all liberals share his anti-Reagan animus in so acute a form. The liberal conventional wisdom, as I read it, goes something like this: perhaps it is just as well that Reagan came along. We needed a breather to recognize some of the mistakes we made by the overzealous prosecution of liberal social policy in the 60's and 70's. But now something needs to be done about education, drugs, homelessness, children in poverty, and so forth, and that "something" must take the form of new federal programs. The American people are once again ready for "affirmative government." And we are wiser now. This time, under Democratic leadership, we will get it right.

Indeed, the urge to try again (albeit with somewhat different nostrums) is as strong among many Republicans as it is among Democrats, which means that some sort of son-of-the-Great-Society seems very likely even if George Bush wins the presidency.

In either case, however, what we will be observing is far from a return to the way things were. Rather, a kind of simultaneous movement seems to be taking place within the body politic, and specifically within the political attitudes of American liberals. It is as if one geological plate, near the surface, were moving in one direction, while beneath it another and much larger plate, with much greater momentum, is moving in a different direction. I hesitate to use the terms "liberal" and "conservative" to describe the two plates: the direction of the upper one is unmistakably to the Left, just as Schlesinger says, but the direction of the other is not to the traditional Right. It is moving off at another angle altogether.

The consequences of this divergence can be specified with some precision. Although we may well be seeing a traditional liberal cycle in policies that affect middle-class and upper-class interests—education, the environment, industrial regulation, and the like—policies aimed at the black underclass in the inner city are likely to reflect a different, and much more ominous, set of dynamics. In my judgment these policies will turn out to be custodial in nature, and their effect will be to make the underclass into wards of the state.

LET me put forward some theses, each of which is based on current or incipient realities, each of which seems to me to have a high probability of coming true in the next decade, and all of which together support my prediction of the coming of custodial democracy.

First, the baby-boom generation is moving into its forties. The leading edge of this age cohort turned forty last year, and the rest will be doing so through the first half of the 90's.

This simple statement of fact has pervasive implications. The baby-boomers, going through personal changes that tend to occur universally from the late thirties to the early forties, are coming out the other side more acutely aware of their own mortality, more attached to family and community, more reconciled to the world as it is and less optimistic about making it better.

Will this help the Republicans? In the past, the electorate has tended to vote more conservatively with age. Although the landslide election of 1984 was something of an exception—voters under thirty voted for Reagan in almost the same proportions as those forty-five and older—in 1980, with a closer election, the contrast was striking: 44 percent of voters under thirty went for Reagan, compared with 56 percent of those forty-five and older. In 1976, in a very close election, Gerald Ford lost among voters under thirty (48 percent) but won among those forty-five and older (53 percent). If this pattern holds, the Republicans have some grounds for optimism, since the number of voters aged thirty-five and older is rising (from two out

CHARLES MURRAY is a Bradley Fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research. He is the author of *Losing Ground* and of the forthcoming *In Pursuit*, which will be published by Simon & Schuster in October.

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of three in the 1980 presidential election to about three out of four in the late 1990's).

These facts notwithstanding, however, it is unlikely that formerly liberal baby-boomers will rush to register as Republicans, or even that they will regard themselves as having grown more conservative. As Ben Wattenberg has observed, people tend to be "imprinted" early in their voting lives; that being so, baby-boomers who were liberal in their twenties are likely to go on identifying themselves with liberalism in their forties and fifties.

But party politics are in any case not the issue here. Whether they vote Democratic or Republican, the passage into middle age will cause the baby-boomers' liberalism to be filtered through an altered sensibility. Indeed, it is precisely because the baby-boomers are likely to continue thinking of themselves as liberals that they will, I believe, be led to support custodial policies, confident that this is the liberal, "compassionate" thing to do.

If history is any guide, the nation itself will go through a midlife crisis along with the baby-boomers. This age cohort has repeatedly demonstrated a critical-mass effect. Just as, in the 1960's, the radicalism of the baby-boomers, then in their teens and twenties, became the national fashion, and just as, in the 1970's, they made the upwardly-mobile acquisitiveness of their thirties a national watchword, so their preoccupation with the novel perspectives of middle age as they reach their forties is also likely to become a rage. Indeed, it has already begun to do so, as is seen in the rash of recent articles on the decline of yuppieism. The yuppies are simply outgrowing that phase of life, as they were bound to do; and as they shift their attention elsewhere, so does and will the nation.

THE aging of the baby-boomers will have its own, "conservatizing" effect on social policy. But it is not happening in a vacuum. With regard to policy affecting the inner-city poor, it is coinciding with a variety of other trends.

As I indicated above, there is no doubt that in the next years new social programs will be tried, whether enthusiastically by a President Dukakis or doggedly by a President Bush. There can also be little question, however, that these programs will fail to affect appreciably the size, or the misery, of the underclass.

Take the new welfare-reform law, recently adopted by Congress amid much fanfare over its promise to lead us at last out of the trap of welfare dependency by imposing stricter work expectations on recipients of federal aid. In fact, the new law does not do anything more than a variety of state-enacted work programs have already tried to do, with only modest and scattered success. No one has proposed a jobs program that will sidestep or overcome the problems encountered in such previous failures as CETA. No one is proposing programs for delinquents or drug addicts or the homeless or any similarly afflicted group that are different from earlier ones.

The truth about our federal social programs is unpalatable, and the attempts to wiggle away from it have been many and resourceful. But here it is, in the words of Peter Rossi, one of our most highly respected experts on this subject:

> A review of the history of the last two decades of efforts to evaluate major social programs in the United States sustains the proposition that over this period the American establishment of policy-makers, agency officials, professionals, and social scientists did not know how to design and implement social programs that were minimally effective, let alone spectacularly so.

This is not the same thing as saying that nothing works. Local programs, especially if they are run by the people who had the idea for them in the first place, do sometimes work. Programs to help those who are helping themselves—the displaced worker with a history of employment, the drug-abuser who is motivated to quit, the dropout who is motivated to study—do sometimes work.

But two categories of programs have failed conspicuously and consistently: large federal programs intended to change behavior (as opposed to dealing out commodities or cash), and any program, small or large, local or federal, trying in particular to change the behavior of a clientele that is not already socialized into norms of working-class and middle-class society. Federal programs to help the underclass fall into both categories. We have spent vast amounts of money on these programs over the past decades, but no matter how much we spend, we still do not know how—let me repeat and emphasize these words, *we do not know how*—to change the behavior of significant proportions of the urban underclass through social engineering.

Now we have a new welfare-reform law, and there will undoubtedly be more to come. In another five or ten years, the new wave of programs to help the underclass escape its condition will have been tried and evaluated in its turn. One can plausibly predict the result: programs aimed at welfare mothers will occasionally show small positive effects—so small, however, that the aggregate numbers of chronic welfare recipients will not have changed. And as for the most important programs, those aimed at the men of the underclass, they will show either no effects at all, or negative ones.

My conclusion is that these results will first be accompanied by a sense of disillusionment and then by a search for scapegoats. Liberals will still be unwilling to accept that the social engineering itself has expanded the underclass. Increasingly, the scapegoats will be members of the underclass themselves: "You just can't do anything with those people."

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AMONG the considerations leading liberals to that position will be the vanishing plausibility of a longstanding shibboleth of social reform, namely, the belief that the problem of unemployment among the underclass has to do mainly with a lack of jobs.

According to this argument, chronic unemployment among the members of the underclass is predominantly "structural" in nature. That is, there are not enough jobs to begin with, and those that exist require qualifications which members of the underclass do not have, or are located in places where they do not live, or offer such dispiritingly low wages that they are not worth the effort. Therefore, the argument concludes, since the root of the problem is the lack of jobs, the provision of jobs is its ultimate solution.*

A natural test of this hypothesis, which amounts to a conventional wisdom of American liberalism, has been under way during the latest economic recovery, the longest peacetime expansion in our history. For two, three, and four years now, some major American cities have been experiencing a full-employment labor market. There is reason to believe, moreover, that those markets will remain tight over the next several years as (because of demographic factors) the number of new job entrants drops.

What are the results of this natural experiment? Although we do not yet have detailed studies of the effects of the economic recovery on the urban poor, the aggregate data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics tell a two-part story.

From 1982 to 1987, while overall white unemployment was dropping from 8.6 percent to 5.3 percent, black unemployment fell from 18.9 percent to 13.0 percent. This was a major improvement, even though the news is obviously not all good: black rates of unemployment still remain very high by white norms, and the black-white ratio of unemployment has continued to rise even during the recovery, as it has tended to do now for more than thirty years, in good times and bad. But there is no question that blacks looking for jobs have done better during the recovery. In the period 1982-87, in all age groups and for both sexes, blacks in the labor market have made large gains.

The catch lies in the phrase, "in the labor market." For the second part of the story is that during the same five-year period when unemployment dropped so dramatically, the percentage of black adults *not* in the labor market changed very little. The only consistent reductions, and they were modest ones, occurred among women. Among men, the proportions remained nearly unchanged.

The labor-market behavior of the men of the underclass is especially crucial, for only by changes in their behavior—in work and in marriage—can the size of the underclass be reduced. The reality that is going to become harder to evade as time goes by is that a large core of young black men is not in the labor market, and the size of that core seems to be extremely resistant to improvements in the economy. The only sign of progress in the aggregate statistics is among black male teen-agers, where the proportion not in the labor market fell from 60 to 56 percent during the years 1982-87. But this can be considered progress only if one ignores the huge size of the base. In 1982, for the critical age period twenty-to-twenty-four, the years when experience and a work record are being (or need to be) established, 21 percent of black males were not in the labor market. In 1987, after five years of economic expansion and falling unemployment, that figure had *risen*, to 22 percent. (The comparable white figures were 14 percent and 13 percent respectively.)

It must be borne in mind, moreover, that these figures refer to *all* young black males, including middle-class and working-class blacks with high labor-force participation rates and high levels of enrollment in school. If we were to factor out those elements, in an attempt to isolate figures for black males in the underclass, the results would be still worse. Although we do not know precisely what percentage of black males living in the inner city are not in school and are not in ill health, but also not in the labor force, the figure appears to be very high and (at the least) holding steady.

It may be that more detailed data from the cities with tight labor markets will mitigate these results—full-employment economies surely draw *some* young males into the labor market. But the figures we already do have from Boston, one of the nation's most touted labor markets, are not encouraging. Boston had reached nearly full employment for blacks by 1987 (the black unemployment rate was a remarkably low 4.1 percent) but, contrary to any reasonable expectation, the proportion of blacks not in the labor market increased, from 35 percent in 1982 to 39 percent in 1987. It has yet to be determined whether the increase occurred among the working class or the underclass, among the young or the old, among men or women; but once again, and stating the case very conservatively, it is difficult to conclude that anything is happening in Boston to change the overall picture.

The argument that "there just aren't any jobs," then, is becoming increasingly hollow, and at the same time a large and extremely visible subpopulation of poor black young males is remaining out of the labor market. For many years, academics and policy-makers alike have found it convenient to dismiss reports of problems in the labor-market behavior of inner-city males as the product of racism or "structural" barriers. A different reality has been out there all along, it has been resolutely

* For a recent and eloquent statement of this case, see William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy.*

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ignored, and it is finally beginning to intrude. Liberals will increasingly be hearing themselves saying, "Those people just don't want to work."

STILL another critical factor in the formation of the new liberal consensus has to do with AIDS. There is a clear danger that over the course of the next ten years, this disease will come increasingly to be identified with the black urban underclass, which will thus increasingly become an object of public fear and dislike, including on the part of liberals.

Now, if AIDS cases are examined in absolute terms, the trendlines for blacks and whites both show steep upward curves, with blacks experiencing substantially *fewer* cases than whites. Thus, from September 1982 to June 1988, the number of AIDS cases among whites rose from 263 to about 37,000 and among blacks from 94 to about 16,500. But when AIDS is considered in terms of the number of cases per 100,000 population, a very different picture emerges, with whites currently at 18 per 100,000, blacks at 55.

In other words, from 1982 to the present, blacks have acquired new cases at an average of three times the rate per 100,000 population as whites. This ratio has not been getting smaller; indeed, since a change in diagnostic requirements in September 1987, it has been growing, and now stands at 3.8 times the white rate.

Just how much worse the situation is in the inner city than in the population at large is only beginning to be measured. A study of 2,000 emergency-room patients at Johns Hopkins University hospital in Baltimore, which serves a predominantly inner-city clientele, found that 5 percent were infected with the AIDS virus. The highest infection rate was found among young black males aged twenty to thirty-four: 11 percent.

The main reason for the differential rates of increase is thought to be drugs. At present, 78 percent of all AIDS cases among whites have been homosexual or bisexual males who do not use intravenous drugs. Homosexuals tend to be well-informed, and in many places well-organized, and have demonstrated their readiness to change behavior. Among blacks, by contrast, only 38 percent of AIDS cases involve homosexual, non-IV-drug-abusing males. Almost all of the rest are associated with drug abuse, heterosexual transmission, or transmission from mother to infant. Most of these cases occur in populations that are notoriously difficult to reach with educational campaigns: not only drug addicts, but the homeless, the chronically unemployed, those living in large inner cities.

It is possible, of course, that a cure for AIDS will be developed soon and thus remove the problem altogether. It is also possible that the increase in AIDS in the inner city will produce, within that environment itself, a major shift of attitudes and, eventually, behavior, rendering drug dealers, drug users, and prostitutes into social pariahs and positively affecting patterns of employment and family formation alike. Realistically, however, both of these possibilities are remote.

If they fail to occur, AIDS in the black inner city will take on a new relevance for the future of liberalism. So far, the reaction to AIDS victims on the part of the general American population has been driven primarily by two considerations. The first has been sympathy, stemming from the widespread recognition that individuals infected with the virus before its effects became publicized had no way of knowing that the behavior in which they were engaged was exposing them to a fatal disease. The second has been empathy: ordinary, non-drug-using heterosexuals, engaging in what heretofore had been considered normal levels of sexual activity, had to worry that they too might get the disease.

But envision this scenario five years from now. By 1993, both sources of compassion have shriveled. The movement toward a more traditional sexual and marital morality, itself encouraged by the presence of AIDS, has continued. A large proportion of the increasingly middle-aged electorate now knows that it is safe from AIDS. Empathy is gone.

Sympathy has been drastically reduced as well. For what will be the attitude of the increasingly monogamous, abstemious, self-righteous, white electorate toward new AIDS victims, who will by this time have become a major tax burden? People who get AIDS at that point, after more than a decade of being told how the disease is transmitted, will more and more be seen as having brought it on themselves—as, indeed, almost all of them will have done.

Against whom will these reactions be directed? Numerically, the majority of AIDS victims will continue to be white, but "numerically" is not the key factor in determining emotional reactions; "prevalence" is the key. That is why, for example, illegitimacy has been seen as a predominantly black problem in the United States even though historically the majority of illegitimate births have been to white women. And that is why, five years from now, AIDS will also be seen as a predominantly black problem. No matter how one plays out the projections, the prevalence of AIDS among inner-city blacks will dwarf its prevalence among whites.

We may add another aggravating circumstance: because behavior changes so much more rapidly among the homosexual population (the source of most of the white problem) than it does or will among IV drug users (the source of most of the black problem), it is even possible that at some point in the foreseeable future the absolute number of active cases among whites will begin to dwindle while the number of active cases among blacks continues to increase, thereby inviting an even starker racial comparison.

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Understanding and patience are going to dwindle across the political spectrum, to be replaced by animosity and/or indifference. Perhaps I am underestimating the compassion of liberals, but I do not believe that they will form a significant exception.

THE reason they will not be an exception is to be found partly in developments within liberalism itself.

Twenty years ago, American liberals began to cut themselves loose from what seemed to many of them at the time an outmoded ideal of political and social equality. Before the mid-1960's, mainstream liberals adhered to a political ideal, grounded in the Constitution itself, according to which we were all equal before God and should be equal before the law. This belief was intimately linked to a social ethic of individual merit and individual achievement; the goal was a society in which each person would be judged, in the famous words of Martin Luther King, Jr., by the content of his character and not by the color of his skin.

But in the course of the 1960's, equality for liberals came to refer to a much more complex and ambitious egalitarian idea. Perhaps, the reasoning went, in some future America the old principles could be reinstituted. But at least until then, and maybe forever, social justice required something else: economic redistribution, equalization of societal outcomes, government regulation of what had hitherto been seen as matters of private association, and laws providing for the redress of historical grievances even if that meant treating whole groups of people unequally (i.e., preferentially).

Over the last twenty years, the new liberal vision, implemented by means of the policy of preferential treatment and quotas, has led to a number of perfectly disastrous and perfectly predictable results—predictable, that is, to anyone willing to think about what it means to apportion the goods of society according to the color of one's skin. Hardly a policy-maker or academic anywhere wants to examine these results, and fewer still wish to speak of them, but snippets keep slipping out.

Thus, for example, in the area of undergraduate education it is revealed that at MIT, the average incoming black, although with math scores that put him in the top 10 percent of all college-bound students, finds himself in the bottom 10 percent of all MIT-bound students—and that the subsequent dropout rate for blacks is 24 percent, compared with 14 percent among whites. In the area of job performance, a study of black electricians hired under an affirmative-action court order in Seattle finds that blacks quit or are fired 4.1 times as often as whites, take 3.1 times as many days to sign up for new jobs at the union hall, turn down jobs 2.7 times as often, and lose 1.7 times as many hours leaving the job site early. In the area of professional training, another study reveals that of blacks admitted to medical school, the average score on the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is well below the average of whites who are *rejected.*

As I have argued elsewhere, racists given a free hand to promote racism among liberals could not have concocted a more efficient scheme than strong affirmative action, otherwise known as preferential discrimination.* By demanding that universities and employers have "enough" blacks no matter what, this scheme systematically maximizes the likelihood that blacks hired at a given job site, or admitted to a given school, will be less capable than the whites beside them. Years of mismatching have facilitated, if they have not actually caused, the recent racial incidents at the Universities of Massachusetts, Michigan, and elsewhere, and these incidents are just the thin leading edge of what we may expect in the coming years.

This does not mean that liberals, having seen the effects of preferential treatment and racial quotas, will openly retreat from them. On the contrary, allegiance to "affirmative action" has become, if anything, a litmus test of one's continuing liberalism among people who know they are backsliding on other issues. Besides, too many liberal policies continue to be bound up in the premise that social justice requires special treatment for groups, and too many powerful liberal constituencies have an interest in seeing those policies continue, whether or not they serve the goal of equality that was once their stated purpose.

So the next decade will witness a dangerous combination: a continuing belief, no longer even questioned, that it is legitimate for government to treat people as members of groups, but without the moral passion which undergirded that belief twenty years ago and even without any faith that the original goal is capable of achievement. In short, liberalism is becoming unmoored: liberals may still want to "do good," but they have long since traded away their only coherent framework for deciding what "doing good" means. In the name of doing good, they will in a few years be ready to undertake race-based measures of a nature that once would have appalled them.

LET us draw together the various strands—the aging of the baby-boomers, the failure of the new wave of liberal programs, the demise of "structural unemployment," the racialization of AIDS, the unmooring of liberalism itself.

For years, the black inner city has been the symbol both of America's past failures and of its obligation to admit blacks to full equality—and it has also been an object of fear, anger, and guilt. Over the next few years, specific and quite powerful trends will effectively diminish the guilt and

* "Affirmative Racism," *New Republic*, December 31, 1984.

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increase the fear and anger—especially among liberals. By the mid-1990's, what is now a more or less hidden liberal condescension toward blacks in general, and toward the black underclass in particular, will have worked its way into a new consensus.

The particular form the new liberal consensus will take depends on circumstances, but in general mainstream liberal intellectuals and policy-makers will have become comfortable believing something like this: (1) inner-city blacks are really quite different from you and me, and the rules that apply to us cannot be applied to them; (2) it is futile to seek solutions that aim at bringing them into participation in American life, because we have seen that it cannot be done; and (3) the humane course is therefore to provide generously, supplying medical care, food, housing, and other social services—much as we currently do for American Indians who live on reservations. And so we will have arrived in the brave new world of custodial democracy, in which a substantial portion of our population, neither convicted as criminal nor adjudged to be insane, will in effect be treated as wards of the state.

To be sure, some such set of beliefs is already abroad in the land, discussed, when it is discussed, *sotto voce*. It is one thing, however, to have views whispered on the outer limits of respectability, and quite another to have them become an intellectual consensus among mainstream liberals, a consensus which large numbers of other Americans, for reasons of their own, might be happy to join. Such views would then become the baseline from which other, still more extreme measures to segregate the underclass could be contemplated. And then we would be in danger of witnessing the unmooring not just of liberalism, but of American democracy itself.

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER is right: intellectual vitality goes in cycles, and the liberals' turn has probably come around again even if the Republicans should keep the White House. The tragedy is that the liberals' turn is coming just at a time when they are about to reap the consequences of a two-decades-old heritage in which they have lost faith but which they cannot bring themselves to disavow.

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How Ronald Reagan Weakened the Presidency

L. Gordon Crovitz

THERE is a general impression that Ronald Reagan has been a strong President, perhaps the strongest since Franklin D. Roosevelt. And indeed in a number of ways Reagan has exercised power very effectively. Yet as keeper of the *institution* of the presidency, he has been a failure.

Liberals may still decry the "imperial presidency," but the reality is that since the last months of the Nixon administration in 1973-74, the presidency has been hampered by two major congressional restrictions on its ability to function. One, involving domestic affairs, is the Budget and Impoundment Control Act; the other, involving foreign policy, is the War Powers Resolution. Both passed despite President Nixon's vigorous opposition, and both vastly expanded the powers of Congress at the expense of the President's. To top it all off, the art of prosecutorial politics, developed during Watergate, was perfected by Congress during the Reagan years as yet another effective weapon in the struggle for power against the executive.

As President, Reagan was presented with important opportunities to fight back in each of these three areas and thereby to reverse the decline of the presidency. In each case he let the opportunities slip. Thus, after two landslide victories and eight years in office, Reagan will leave the presidency even weaker that he found it.

I

THE Budget Act of 1974 was crafted by Congress to rob the President of the ability to limit spending, while making it possible for a fragmented collection of Congressmen to spend and at the same time to evade the responsibility for doing so.

There was no formal budget until 1921, when Congress authorized the President to submit one annually. This system worked well for many years, with the White House clearly responsible and accountable. In addition, the impoundment power gave Presidents final authority on whether to spend funds appropriated by Congress. Budgets were treated as maximum amounts that the President could use for various programs, not as minimums. And, in fact, before 1974, Presidents often decided not to spend appropriated funds, either because the purpose of the expenditure no longer made sense or for macroeconomic reasons.

Every President since Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who impounded $500 million that had been appropriated for public works, used this power to limit spending. By impounding funds John F. Kennedy cut spending by 6 percent. In 1966, even though he was at the height of his War on Poverty, Lydon Johnson impounded more that $5 billion in funds that had been appropriated for everything from agriculture to education.

Yet when in 1973, Nixon tried to impound $12 billion in appropriated funds—including $6 billion of an $11-billion sewage-treatment bill Congress had passed in 1972 over his veto—the roof fell in. Ignoring the rich history behind Nixon's action, Senator Sam Ervin, chairman of the Government Operations Committee, denounced it as "an item or line veto," which, said Ervin, was not permitted by the Constitution. Nixon countered that presidential power to impound funds "when the spending of money would mean either increasing prices or increasing taxes . . . is absolutely clear." A Justice Department spokesman also testified that the impoundment power was "an implied constitutional right" of the executive branch.

The merits of the constitutional debate were on Nixon's side, but he was then at the nadir of his Watergate fortunes and Congress was determined to make the most of the opportunity to increase its own powers at the expense of the presidency. Accordingly, the budget law passed in 1974 completely prohibited impoundments and created "deferrals" and "rescissions" in their place. Henceforth Presidents could only delay spending by issuing a deferral, but either the House or Senate could pass a resolution ordering that the money be spent. A President could also rescind an appropriation, but for the recission to be effective, both the House and Senate would have to vote their approval within 45 days. Absent any action by the two houses, the President would be

L. GORDON CROVITZ, whose article, "Crime, the Constitution, and the Iran-Contra Affair," appeared in our October 1987 issue, is the assistant editorial-page editor of the *Wall Street Journal*.

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required to spend the funds after the 45-day period.

Having survived a legal challenge in the Supreme Court (there was no way Nixon could win *anything* in the midst of Watergate), the new law went on its predictable course: since 1974, very few deferrals or rescissions have been allowed by Congress.

WORSE yet, by 1987, Congress was violating its own rules. Instead of passing thirteen separate appropriations bills for different functions of government, as required by the 1974 budget law, Congress now rolled them all into one massive "continuing resolution." For 1988 this omnibus $605-billion appropriations bill, running to 1,057 pages with an accompanying conference report of 1,194 pages and a reconciliation bill of 1,186 pages, was presented to the President late in December 1987 with less than a day to read before federal funds ran out. Rather than close the government down (something he had done in his first term, to no long-range effect), Reagan signed.

For the next two months the country witnessed the absurd spectacle of Congressmen gradually discovering what they had approved and President Reagan learning what he signed. Among the most well-publicized outrages was a 20-percent pay hike for top congressional staff members, which no Congressman has yet admitted to inserting and which brought their salaries to the level of four-star generals and above Undersecretaries of State. Another was a provision secretly inserted by Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii to send $8 million to support a school for North African Jewish immigrants in France. (The brouhaha over this provision eventually forced revocation.)

A third was another secret provision, inserted by Senator Edward Kennedy, which in effect prohibited the Federal Communications Commission from allowing Rupert Murdoch to own both a newspaper and a television station in New York and Boston. This provision was later invalidated by the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington, but not before Murdoch had already been forced to sell the New York *Post* at a firesale price.

This total breakdown in the budget process offered President Reagan a wonderful opportunity to challenge the 1974 law that had so badly clipped the presidency's authority over the budget. Indeed, in a series of articles written for the *Wall Street Journal*, Stephen Glazier argued that even aside from the impoundment power, the President actually had the line-item veto if only he would use it. Glazier's thesis was based on Article I, Section 7, Clause 3 of the Constitution, which insists that "every Order, Resolution or Vote to which the Concurrence of the Senate and House of Representatives may be necessary" must be subject to possible presidential veto whether or not defined as a "bill." (The intent was to ensure that Congress could not avoid the veto by legislative legerdemain—such as all-in-one continuing resolutions.)

Yet when asked by Attorney General Edwin Meese to assess the Glazier argument, Charles Cooper, then head of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, offered a timid response that went a long way toward explaining how the presidency has become so weakened. Cooper said that the courts have never interpreted this clause as establishing a line-item veto, and fretted that it might be a risky claim for a President to make. And in a similar spirit, Vice President George Bush wrote Glazier that "the lawyers have persuaded me that the practical problems of asserting the kind of veto you suggest or of framing it properly for judicial resolution are too great. . . ."

In reply Glazier told the Vice President that "What the executive needs on the Clause 3 Veto is advice from lawyers who act like advocates, not judges. The executive needs advice on how to achieve the policies that the executive desires. . . ." To this, one might add that, in addition to presidential lawyers who act like lawyers, what we also need are Presidents who act like Presidents, who are careful to guard presidential powers more vigorously than Congress can whittle them away.

Ronald Reagan has not been such a President with respect to the budget process.

II

THE War Powers Resolution, requiring congressional approval for the commitment of U.S. forces in combat abroad for longer than 60 days, and its progeny (notably the five Boland amendments limiting presidential discretion in aiding the democratic resistance in Nicaragua) have had the same paralyzing effect on foreign policy that the prohibition of impoundments and the evisceration of the veto have had on controlling the budget. To be sure, no President has made the mistake of acquiescing in the constitutionality of the War Powers Resolution, which was passed in 1973 over the veto of President Nixon. But certainly they have all had to condition defense strategy on the possibility that Congress might indeed some day try to enforce its provisions.

Eugene V. Rostow is clearly correct in saying that this resolution is a case of "the primacy of procedure over substance" in foreign policy. Thus, he writes, "We try to devise procedural solutions for problems like Vietnam because the leaders of our public opinion have not achieved a national consensus about the kind of foreign policy the safety of the nation requires at this stage of world history." There is no better example of how procedure has been used to cripple the already weakened back of presidential authority over foreign policy than the recent history of U.S. efforts to

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help the Nicaraguan *contras* in their struggle against the Sandinista regime.

In retrospect, the beginning of the end for this effort dates from a strange episode in the spring of 1984, when the CIA's involvement in the mining of Nicaragua's Corinto harbor was leaked. This leak had several fatal effects. As a strategic matter, it terminated a successful operation that was slowing the delivery of Soviet weapons to Nicaragua at a time when the Sandinistas had not yet consolidated their power. But no less important was the fact that the affair ignited a distrust of the administration in Congress that would soon result in the extraordinary strictures of the Boland amendments. These constraints on executive-branch action in Central America in turn made the Iran-*contra* affair a scandal waiting to happen.

Despite later expressions of horror by some Senators, there had never been any deception about CIA involvement in the mining. In accordance with reporting requirements that had been set up in the 70's to oversee the CIA, Director William Casey, beginning in January 1984, briefed Congress eleven times on the mining. These briefings were straightforward. One classified report to the intelligence committees on CIA activity stated: "Magnetic mines have been placed in the Pacific harbor of El Bluff, as well as the oil terminal at Puerto Sandino."

Not surprisingly, the congressional minority opposed to any U.S. aid for the *contras* began to leak details of the operation. But the decisive leak came in April from an odd source, Senator Barry Goldwater, who was then chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, in an odd place, the floor of the Senate. The way it happened is a classic cautionary tale of the risks to the secrecy of covert operations in any reporting requirement.

Senator Joseph Biden was reading a classified report on the mining prepared by the intelligence staff. Surprised, Biden asked Senator William Cohen what he knew about the operation. The two then turned to Goldwater. For reasons that remain unclear, Goldwater immediately began reading the classified report into the record. His staff director raced over to Cohen, screaming, "Get him off, get him down, stop him from reading that." But it was too late. Though Goldwater's citations were struck from the *Congressional Record*, journalists present reported what they had heard.

The leak was unfortunate, but more damaging yet was the reaction of the liberals, led by Senator Daniel P. Moynihan, Goldwater's co-chairman on the bipartisan Intelligence Committee, who announced that they had never been informed by the CIA about its participation in the mining.

The best explanation for this reaction is, paradoxically, that many Congressmen simply could not forgive the CIA, not for any alleged illegalities but for just the opposite: for doing its duty under the law and reporting the mining. Having been told, members of Congress were put in an awkward position. They either had to acknowledge that they knew and had at least tacitly approved, or they had to deny that they knew and point accusatory fingers. Naturally they chose the latter course.

Not only did Ronald Reagan fail to seize on the chance provided here to challenge reporting requirements of dubious constitutionality and practical consequence, he even passively accepted the equally dubious fruit of the mining episode—the third Boland amendment.

The immediate effect of this provision—which would ultimately serve as the basis for the indictments of Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, Admiral John Poindexter, Richard Secord, and Albert Hakim—was to cut the usual intelligence agencies out of the Central America "loop." With the CIA and the Defense Department now prohibited from aiding the *contras*, only the National Security Council was left to do the job. It was thus that Oliver North became the *contras'* one-man lifeline. This is the meaning of the pitiful computer message North sent to Poindexter in 1986, while operating under the Boland strictures: "What we need is to get the CIA re-engaged in this effort so that it can be better managed than it now is by one sightly confused Marine Lt. Col." Obviously, President Reagan had put his staff officers into an impossibly difficult position by signing the continuing resolution that included the Boland amendment.

To be sure, no one then anticipated the "criminalization of policy differences," as North would later describe the phenomenon to his congressional tormentors. Nevertheless, it was clear after Corinto and the Boland amendments that the procedure-based approach by Congress to the real issues raised by the events in Nicaragua would handicap the administration's policy. In the event, Congress was able to starve the *contras* of consistent aid long enough to force them to surrender. This will likely be remembered as the major foreign-policy disaster of the Reagan years, and the irony is that the "great communicator" never managed to force the yes-or-no, up-or-down vote by Congress that would have established a clear line of responsibility if the *contras* were forced off the field of battle.

And here again—here perhaps most of all—Reagan let slip a great opportunity to take his case to the public. In November 1986, Reagan permitted Attorney General Meese, in announcing that funds from the sale of arms to Iran had been diverted to the *contras*, to treat the matter as a possible crime. What Reagan could and should have done was to go before the American people and say that while the diversion itself had not been authorized, it was consistent with his policy of doing everything within the power of the executive branch unilaterally to help the *contras*. And he could have blamed Congress for forcing such

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innovative financing by not pursuing a consistent policy of its own.

This argument in favor of executive power and against congressional usurpation was of course eventually made, to the acclaim of the nation and to the deep embarrassment of Congress—but it was made by Oliver North and not by Ronald Reagan. "It is mind-boggling to me," North told the Iran-*contra* joint committee,

> that Congress has attempted to criminalize policy differences between co-equal branches of government and the executive's conduct of foreign affairs. I suggest to you that it is the Congress which must accept the blame in the Nicaragua freedom-fighter matter. Plain and simple, Congress is to blame because of the fickle, vacillating, unpredictable, on-again, off-again policy toward the Nicaraguan democratic resistance.

It is entirely possible that if the diversion had been described by Reagan himself as overexuberance by patriotic officials trying to keep the *contras* alive during congressional fudging on the issue, the affair could have strengthened the presidency instead of nearly paralyzing it for its last two years. But Reagan decided to invoke the ignorance defense, claiming that he had no idea that any of his staff had been helping the *contras* or where the necessary funds had come from. This defense was hardly credible, and indeed, as even Arthur Liman, the Senate's chief interrogator, has acknowledged, it represented a great political blunder. Looking back recently at the scandal, Liman said:

> The reality of it is that you had a catastrophe in national policy that the President could have ended before it got off the ground by saying, "Yes, it was a mistake. I authorized it." He even could have dealt with the diversion and he would not have been impeached. But there were inconsistent statements coming out and there were all the earmarks of a coverup and inevitably that led to the congressional investigation.

Furthermore, the ignorance defense conceded too much. For it implicitly accepted congressional authority over executive-branch aid despite a 200-year history full of unilateral presidential acts much more extensive than a few million dollars for the *contras*. Thus, as the minority report of the Iran-*contra* committees emphasized:

> The administration did proceed legally in pursuing both its *contra* policy and the Iran arms initiative. . . . It is important to stress, however, that the administration could have avoided every one of the legal problems it inadvertently encountered, while continuing to pursue the exact same policies as it did.

It fell to these Republican Congressmen to remind Reagan that "The President's inherent constitutional powers are only as strong as the President's willingness to defend them."

III

For North and Poindexter, who had already been sacrificed to an insatiable Congress armed with the unchecked powers of a special prosecutor, it was a reminder that came too late. But Reagan did not even take note of it in connection with a subsequent congressional challenge to one of the clearest presidential prerogatives in the Constitution, the power to negotiate treaties.

This challenge came in the course of the debate over ratification of the INF treaty which the Democrats, led by Senator Sam Nunn, decided to use in pursuing their longstanding battle with Reagan over whether or not the ABM treaty of 1972 permits SDI to be tested in space. Thus as the price of ratifying the INF agreement while Reagan was in Moscow at his summit with Mikhail Gorbachev, the Democrats added the "condition" that treaties must be interpreted according to the "common understanding . . . shared by the President and the Senate at the time the Senate gives its advice and consent to ratification."

Apart from the problems of interpretation it presents, this condition is blatantly unconstitutional. The Constitution says that Presidents negotiate treaties with other countries, not with the Senate. Treaties are contracts between nations, not between branches of our government. The Senate can pretend to bind the U.S., but none of its "implicit understandings" (as a report by the Foreign Relations Committee calls them) will bind other nations.

In short, the Senate can withhold its ratification, or it can insist on renegotiation, but it cannot negotiate with the administration over what the Senate would like the treaty to have said, thereby binding the U.S. but leaving the Soviets free to adopt a less restrictive interpretation.

Nevertheless, before the vote on the condition, Reagan's chief of staff, Howard Baker, announced that the White House did not oppose its inclusion, and it passed the Senate overwhelmingly. Having paid the price in the coin of presidential power and constitutional integrity, Reagan was awarded with the treaty in time for a symbolic signing ceremony in Moscow.

Robert Bork has suggested that the presidency would be in much better shape today if Richard Nixon had reacted to the passage of the War Powers Resolution by denying it had any legal significance at all. "He might have made the resolution's true nature apparent by withholding his veto," Bork has said, "and sending a note back to Congress saying something like, 'Thank you for your essay on your understanding of my constitutional powers. When time permits, I will send you my essay on my understanding of my con-

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stitutional powers.' " Exactly this kind of reaction by Reagan to the INF condition would have been entirely appropriate, but it came from him only two weeks *after* the vote when he wrote in a letter to the Senate:

> The principles of treaty interpretation recognized and repeatedly invoked by the courts may not be limited or changed by the Senate alone. . . . Accordingly, I am compelled to state that I cannot accept the proposition that a condition in a resolution to ratification can alter the allocation of rights and duties under the Constitution; nor could I, consistent with my oath of office, accept any diminution claimed to be effected by such a condition in the constitutional powers and responsibilities of the presidency.

In response, Senator Nunn in effect said what Bork thought Nixon (and Reagan) should have said: "The President's letter is entertaining but irrelevant." And Senator Robert Byrd added: "The fight is over and apparently the President just woke up to find out who won."

Once again, then, Ronald Reagan permitted a further weakening of the powers of the presidency.

IV

ANOTHER great loss to the presidency in the past eight years can be measured in the extraordinary number of people who came to Washington to work for Reagan and were then driven out of town on trumped-up "ethics" charges as the President stood by and waved them a fond farewell.

Venomous hatred of Reaganism, and its threat to the liberal status quo, may have made these attacks inevitable. But even if they could not have been prevented by Reagan, he certainly did little to counter them.

The best known and most scurrilous of them all, the brutalizing of Robert Bork, also provided the clearest example of White House passivity.* The long-term effect of this case on the judiciary and on the level of political debate remains to be seen, but the immediate result was that the Senate stopped bothering to hold hearings at all on some judicial nominees who could be described as controversial under the post-Bork rules of the game.

At least Bork was never threatened with jail. Other conservatives, aside even from the Iran-*contra* defendants, were not so lucky. The tragic story of what happened to Raymond Donovan early in Reagan's first term proved to be a foretaste of things to come. No sooner had he been nominated as Secretary of Labor than congressional liberals began raising questions about his ethics. Then accusations intensified as Donovan cut the department's budget by one-third. Eventually, the then Attorney General, William French Smith, was forced to appoint an independent counsel, who spent nine months investigating before reporting no evidence of wrongdoing. Even so, one month before the 1984 presidential election, Donovan was indicted in a New York State court on no fewer than 137 counts.

The first sitting Cabinet member ever indicted, he resigned from his position to stand trial. Yet so weak was the case against him that, without the defense even calling any witnesses, and on the first ballot, the jury not only found him innocent of all charges but applauded him at the conclusion of the trial. The day he was acquitted, Donovan (who in addition to everything else had been left with legal bills running to millions of dollars) asked an enormously poignant question: "Which office do I go to to get my reputation back?"

It was the same question that would be on the lips of all the other Reagan officials and appointees whose reputations were unjustly besmirched either by politically inspired prosecutions by independent counsels created by Congress or in inquisitorial congressional hearings, and who were left undefended by the White House. Indeed, thanks to Reagan's acquiescence in the post-Watergate system of prosecutorial politics, it has become so dangerous to accept a job in the executive branch that many first-rate people will hesitate to do so in the future. And in this way too, Reagan has left the presidency even weaker than it was before.

The upshot is that the next President will inherit an office whose powers under the Constitution have been steadily eroded by various forms of congressional usurpation. George Bush says he wants to reverse this assault on the constitutional balance; Michael Dukakis seems satisfied with congressional supremacy. But even Dukakis, if elected, would soon discover that an aggressive assertion of executive power was in his own interest as President, and that the job is hardly worth having without the authority that Reagan never actually demanded and consequently never enjoyed.

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* See Suzanne Garment's article, "The War Against Robert H. Bork," in the January 1988 issue of COMMENTARY for a detailed account.

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Judaism According to Emil Fackenheim

Robert M. Seltzer

IN THE course of overlapping careers as rabbi, professor of philosophy, and theologian, Emil Fackenheim has produced a shelf of books that must be considered among the most important works of serious Jewish religious thought in the second half of this century.

Some of those books are technical in nature, devoted to specific issues in Jewish theology. Others, however, are addressed to a wide general audience. Such is Fackenheim's most recent book, which is also his most personal, accessible, and comprehensive, *What is Judaism? An Interpretation for the Present Age.** And we are also fortunate to have just now a large anthology, *The Jewish Thought of Emil Fackenheim,*† containing a judicious selection ranging from unpublished student pieces from the late 30's to extracts from Fackenheim's latest work of technical theology, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Future Jewish Thought* (1982). Together, these two books offer a good occasion for a look at Fackenheim's lifelong bid to sustain Jewish faith against the onslaught of modern philosophical thought, and to define an "authentic" Jewish existence in the post-Holocaust age.

IN 1977, the late Gershom Scholem, the great historian of Jewish mysticism, brought out a small book of personal reminiscence with the title *From Berlin to Jerusalem.* Emil Fackenheim's memoirs, were he ever to write them, would also describe a journey from Berlin to Jerusalem, but by a different route.

Born in Germany in 1916, Fackenheim experienced the rise to power of the Nazis when still in high school in Halle. Whereas Scholem became a Zionist in his youth, and went to Palestine directly from Germany in the mid-1920's, Fackenheim, who abandoned the anti-Zionist stance of his family for "non-Zionism," entered the Reform rabbinic seminary (the illustrious *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums)* in 1935. In the aftermath of *Kristallnacht* in 1938 he was seized and sent to the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen. Among the fortunate few who were subsequently released, Fackenheim found refuge in England and then in Canada where he served as rabbi in Hamilton, Ontario, and then as a longtime member of the philosophy department of the University of Toronto. In 1974 he settled in Israel with his family.

Gershom Scholem's spiritual road to Zion ran through the "cultural Zionism" of the essayist Ahad Ha-Am and by way of Jewish historiography, especially the philological and literary study of the Kabbalah. Emil Fackenheim's ran by way of Sören Kierkegaard and dialectical theology, Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber, medieval Arabic philosophical texts and modern German philosophers from Immanuel Kant to Martin Heidegger. The results, in Fackenheim's case, have been quite as revisionist of the Jewish intellectual mainstream as Scholem's work. Scholem used to insist that he was only a disinterested historian and not a theologian, but his regard for the continued vitality of Jewish religiosity is evident in a subterranean way in any number of his scholarly writings and overtly in his "Reflections on Jewish Theology" (1974), one of the most perceptive articles on the subject in recent decades. Conversely, Fackenheim, a philosopher and a theologian, has found himself forced to wrestle openly and continually with the problems posed by a modern understanding of history and modern historical methodologies for what has been called (occasionally by Fackenheim himself) "postmodern" Judaism.

The term "postmodern" has been applied—in a vague, polemical, and sometimes pejorative sense—to a variety of cultural tendencies. In the arts, the postmodern style is marked by the deliberate employment of traditional elements discarded by the avant-garde: tonality in music, for example, or pictorial representation in painting, or classical columns and Romanesque arches in architecture. Not infrequently these elements are "quoted" in an eclectic, whimsical, stylized manner within works whose methods and structures are themselves modern in the larger sense. Likewise, postmodern theology does not so much

ROBERT M. SELTZER is professor of Jewish history at Hunter College and the Graduate School of the City University of New York and the author of *Jewish People, Jewish Thought.*

* Summit Books, 320 pp., $18.95.

† Edited by Michael L. Morgan, Wayne State University Press, 394 pp., $39.95.

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repudiate modernity as aim at a self-conscious synthesis of the modern mentality with reappropriated classical values, sacred texts, and traditional ways of interpreting those texts. In Fackenheim's thought, the stress has fallen on the interplay between a living present and the immediacy of what he calls the "root experiences" of Judaism in the Exodus from Egypt and the covenant at Mount Sinai.

Postmodern theology does take decided issue with certain aspects of modernity, however. In his earlier writings, Fackenheim sought to expose the tendency of Jewish religious modernists to make man, in effect, the arbiter of the divine and to be excessively optimistic about human progress. In contrast to the medievals, he wrote, modern Jewish philosophy presupposed rather than proved that "human reason could dissect without remainder texts that claimed to be divinely inspired" and restricted the realm of the divine commandments to the categorical imperative of the "moral law." He, by contrast, unabashedly took his stand on a personal and transcendent God (rather than on a God-idea immanent in history); on an appreciation of authentic Jewish styles of worship and direct encounter with Jewish texts (rather than relying on scientific-historical criticism); and on a commitment to the irreducible particularity of the Jewish people (rather than an emphasis on the universal essence of Judaism).

Fackenheim has written that Kierkegaard was an early inspiration (and we would probably have to add such figures of crisis or dialectical theology as Karl Barth), but equally influential was the Jewish religious existentialism pioneered by Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber. Fackenheim's belief that truth is acquired in and through personal commitment follows Rosenzweig's "new thinking," itself a bridge between the older philosophical idealism that had dominated modern Jewish thought up to World War I and the more tradition-oriented mode of Jewishness that came to be increasingly prevalent thereafter. And Fackenheim similarly provides a crucial connecting link between the Jewish thought of pre-Holocaust Europe and the first post-Holocaust generation of American Jewry, whose attitudes toward the Jewish religion, knowingly or not, have been more influenced by Rosenzweig than perhaps by any other figure.

Michael L. Morgan's anthology contains an early essay illustrating the influence on Fackenheim, while still a rabbinic student, of Rosenzweig's distinction between *mitzvah*—that which has come to have for one the force of a divine commandment—and Halakhah, mere law which has not yet been internalized as religiously binding. Thus we find the young Fackenheim declaring that "the task of the present generation is to be ready for faith, i.e., ready to let the Other as Demanding enter into its very midst." Admitting the riskiness of faith, the young Fackenheim nevertheless effectively calls the bluff of the atheist, the agnostic, and the radical empiricist who, by their existential decision to remain spectators, cut themselves off from the very possibility of discovering God and thus of transcending their essentially tragic, unredeemed view of the human situation.

THE influence of Martin Buber is quite as evident as that of Rosenzweig in Fackenheim's early writing. For Fackenheim, Buber's conception of the I-Thou relationship provided the key to revelation as the primordial experience of ancient Jews recorded in the Bible and as an eternal potentiality in the present. Revelation for Fackenheim is God's "incursion" into the present, an incursion which of course presupposes the willingness of human beings to open themselves up to the distinct and separate ontological realm in which such revelatory events happen. There is no "It" at all in the moment of revelation, when every It becomes either the partner to whom God speaks or a symbol through which God speaks. Although the moment of encounter cannot be adequately captured in writing, it can be remembered and has been recorded by human beings as their personal response to having been divinely addressed.

Such a concept of revelation leads to the question of the religious significance of history. In 1961 Fackenheim delivered the Aquinas Lecture at Marquette University on the theme "Metaphysics and Historicity." Here he contended that all philosophizing, ancient, medieval, and modern, is tied to its historical situation. The "predicament of history" is that "timeless truth" is somehow always a reflection of the age in which it is articulated. Yet although man "constitutes himself" in time, beyond such self-constituting action there is another reality, "other than man," that has a share in the shaping of human existence. In a brief epilogue Fackenheim remarks that he holds this other-than-human reality to be God.

These and other themes in Fackenheim's writing were developed mainly in the period between 1945 and 1967. They are prologue to the original turn his thought took in the latter year.

Fackenheim was not alone in requiring the passage of two decades after the end of World War II to gain sufficient perspective on the Holocaust to be able to confront it theologically. Only in the middle 1960's was the Nazi Final Solution given a Jewish name and widely perceived as a historical event of such singularity that it could not easily be assimilated into the conventional historical or Jewish categories—that it could not, in Fackenheim's view, be assimilated into them at all. And only after Israel's miraculous victory in June 1967—a victory preceded by weeks and days in which it seemed, incredibly, that the Holocaust was about to be reenacted on Middle Eastern soil—were the energies released to inquire

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deeply into the meaning of the Holocaust for Jewish survival.

Since 1967, Fackenheim has repeatedly insisted, using powerful and telling illustrations, that the Holocaust was a "*novum*," something drastically new, an instance of "radical, unprecedented evil." In the merciless light of Nazi bestiality, with its determination to murder the whole Jewish people, the issue for the theologian became one of saving Jewish religious faith. That issue was compounded by the agonizing question of why a survivor of the Holocaust—and all contemporary Jews are in some sense its survivors—should have children and raise those children as Jews.

THE project upon which Fackenheim embarked, and in which he is still engaged, brought together the earlier themes of his work—Jewish particularity, the ever-present accessibility of revelation, the spiritual meaning of history—while leading him in new directions. Martin Buber had coined the phrase the "eclipse of God" to describe the apparent negation of God's presence in the face of a historical abyss like Auschwitz. To Fackenheim, such a way of putting it ignored the evidence that, in the midst of the Holocaust and thereafter, God's will had been grasped by some—indeed, that God's voice was and is heard by *amkha*, the ordinary Jewish people.

The celebrated principle in which Fackenheim formulated the response of *amkha* to the divine voice was "the 614th commandment." (According to traditional teaching there are a total of 613 commandments incumbent upon every Jew to perform.) As he wrote in an essay first published in COMMENTARY ("Jewish Faith and the Holocaust," August 1968) and has elaborated many times over, a "commanding voice" issued from Auschwitz. According to that voice,

> Jews are forbidden to hand Hitler posthumous victories. They are commanded to survive as Jews, lest the Jewish people perish. They are commanded to remember the victims of Auschwitz, lest their memory perish. They are forbidden to despair of man and his world, and to escape into either cynicism or otherworldliness, lest they cooperate in delivering the world over to the forces of Auschwitz. Finally, they are forbidden to despair of the God of Israel, lest Judaism perish.

The Buberian idea of revelation as an ineffable encounter between an "I" and a "Thou" gives way here to an instruction for action. For Fackenheim, mere intellectual vision is inevitably blurred, shot through with unresolvable tension. But in the biblical tradition, vision is secondary, hearing God's word is central. If, after the war, Jewish theologians were unable to formulate a coherent theodicy reconciling God's goodness and power with the naked fact of Auschwitz, in retrospect it appears that *amkha* had already responded to the divine command. First, there were the acts of resistance in Nazi-occupied Europe, acts more varied, more intense, and more widespread than had at first been believed. Second, there was the visceral, ongoing determination of ordinary Jews to rebuild Jewish life in and through the state of Israel. To Fackenheim, all this suggested that the vital core of the Jewish people had reaffirmed its continuing witness to Judaism's place in history—and this "stubborn fidelity" of the Jews in turn reaffirmed, "as it were," God's place in history as well.

In his notion of *amkha* as the (unconsciously) willing recipient of revelation after the Holocaust, Fackenheim accomplished a major revision of the theology of Franz Rosenzweig. A religiously liberal Jew, Rosenzweig had nevertheless placed at the heart of Judaism the traditional Jewish way of accepting the Bible as "Torah," not just ancient literature but the Word of God. He had also come to accept some, if not all, Jewish laws as commandments personally addressed to him. But Rosenzweig was not captivated by Zionism, and he conceived of the Jewish people as living "outside" of the stream of history.

Fackenheim, by contrast, came to speak of a "Jewish return to history," the title of a book he published in 1978, and of Zionism and the state of Israel as the main vehicles of that return. The Holocaust had demonstrated that Jewish "servitude" to the powers-that-be must be resolved now, in history, and not in messianic times. "What made [the Holocaust]—thus far—unbearable," he wrote, "is an unprecedented togetherness of helplessness in the victims with wickedness in their persecutors. It is necessary to make an end to this togetherness, and since the victims cannot make an end to the wickedness they must make an end to the helplessness."

Into Rosenzweig's doctrine of revelation, in other words, Fackenheim brought the survivalism that had been at the heart of a number of *secular* nationalist ideologies since the late 19th century. Ahad Ha-Am and Simon Dubnow, the fathers of Jewish cultural survivalism, had found the ultimate explanation for Jewish history in the active will of the Jewish *people* to persevere in its individuality. For these secularists, God and the Torah were but the mutable stratagems employed historically by the Jewish elemental life force, which in the present age could and would take on different forms not necessarily tied to the categories of ethical monotheism or the supernatural authority of any of the laws of Torah.

Fackenheim, however, now saw secular Zionism as itself rooted in something more than nationalism. "If at its best Western Jewish fideism," as in the writings of Franz Rosenzweig, "showed fidelity to the God of Israel but abandoned the Jewish people, Eastern Jewish secularism at its best showed fidelity to the Jewish people but

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abandoned the God of Israel." In Fackenheim's attempt to heal the breach, the concept of *amkha* served as nexus.

FACKENHEIM'S preoccupation with *amkha* has remained an integral part of his thought to this day. In *What Is Judaism?*, indeed, he begins by citing the simple fidelity of present-day Jews to Jewish survival, a commitment that has turned Ahad Ha-Am and Dubnow into veritable prophets of a dominant Jewish stance. From there he proceeds to a reading of the Bible as a Jewish book, then to the question of how a contemporary Jew can have access to the Bible as *the* Book, as Torah. After observations on what Judaism specifically means and will continue to mean (what is "living by Torah," "learning Torah," Jewish ethics, prayer, the cycles of worship), he takes up the relation of the Jewish people to the perplexities of its history (anti-Semitism, Judaism and Christianity, Jewish messianism).

Though he insists that "God is the ultimate theme of Judaism . . . the theme of themes," only in the last pages of *What Is Judaism?* does Fackenheim venture to discuss "God in the age of Auschwitz and the rebuilt Jerusalem." Here he invokes the midrashic rhetorical device of *kivyakhol* ("as it were"), which means that any statement so qualified is at once true, "that it falls short of the ultimate form of truth, and that the ultimate form is beyond our finite understanding and in the keeping of God alone." He applies this midrashic mode of apprehension to God's independent yet paradoxically reciprocal relation to the Jews, His "witnesses." "So involved with His witnesses is God in His intimacy as to make Him, as it were, 'not God' if He is abandoned by His witnesses. And so independent is He in His infinity of all human praise as to be, if not praised by them, as it were, 'lovely in Himself.' " If such paradoxes seem to border on the mystical, for Fackenheim that may be, finally, a realm in which the "ultimate theme" of Judaism can best be understood; in a brief epilogue to this book he appeals (in spite of his general discomfort with the Kabbalah) to Jewish mysticism as he reaches for language to capture the relation between God and the Jews in history:

> If the house has an owner, why does He not put the fire out? Perhaps He can and yet will. Perhaps He cannot or will not. But if He cannot or will not, a Jew today must do what he can to put the fire out himself. A kabbalistic saying is to the effect that the effort from below calls forth a response from above.

OVER the years, Fackenheim's thought has been subjected to a fair amount of comment, much of it focusing on his views of the Holocaust. Even among his admirers he has been taken to task for exaggerating the significance that the Holocaust poses for Jewish theology, for overemphasizing its historical uniqueness, or for seeming to ground all prospect of future Jewish salvation in the Holocaust itself. Thus in a 1971 review of *God's Presence in History*, Michael Wyschogrod contended in response to Fackenheim that "If there is hope after the Holocaust, it is because, to those who believe, the voices of the Prophets speak more loudly than did Hitler, and because the divine promise sweeps over the crematoria and silences the voice of Auschwitz." Likewise David Singer, reviewing *The Jewish Return to History*, asked, "Can a religion which places the Exodus at the center of its faith grant equal status to a totally destructive event like the Holocaust?" And in an essay on Fackenheim as "theologian of the Holocaust" Hyam Maccoby averred: "To see the Holocaust, as Emil Fackenheim does, as a revelatory event, exposing the basic situation of humanity, is to give it far too much centrality."

Fackenheim's almost sensationalist conception of a 614th commandment forbidding Jews to grant posthumous victories to Hitler has also provoked strong demurrals—on the ground that it seems to give pride of place to Hitler as a reason for Jews to bear children and to rear them as Jews. David Singer has paraphrased the objections of the Orthodox and the agnostic alike: "Why should the traditional Jew, who lives by the 613 commandments, need an additional one to ensure Jewish survival? In what sense can the secular Jew be commanded, when he does not believe in a Commander?" In a fine and careful essay on Fackenheim's religious thought, Michael A. Meyer agrees that there is a commandment issuing forth from the Holocaust—"to survive as Jews, continuing to hope and to act in an unredeemed world"—but takes issue with Fackenheim's existentialism by proposing that this duty is "the command of a God who is the source of the distant but urgent moral ideal glimpsed by Israel's prophets and sages," rather than Fackenheim's God of history, about whom "it seems no longer possible to say anything meaningful."

Perhaps the problem here is that the language of divine commandment is too narrow to accommodate the revelatory interchange to which Fackenheim points. Certainly the Holocaust gives rise to a twofold Jewish nightmare: the overwhelming potency of human evil to degrade and destroy, and a vision of a world without the Jewish people. Attesting to God's presence in history means, for Fackenheim, reaffirming the human capacity to resist evil both physically and spiritually, and it means detecting signs of a reconfirmation of the convenant which is the essential theological rationale for there being a people of Israel at all. Formulating this attestation as a command, which is what Fackenheim does, recalls the role of the talmudic sages who amplified the list of benedictions and obligations incumbent on Israel by establishing that Jews are "commanded," for ex-

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ample, to light Hanukkah lamps even though no such command is found in the written Torah. (Actually, Fackenheim might be viewed less as a rabbinic interpreter of Torah than as a thinker in the tradition of Deutero-Isaiah, the otherwise anonymous prophet of the Babylonian exile who unforgettably endowed historical catastrophe with religious meaning, offered consolation for the devastating burden of sin and defeat, and found hope of redemption in a return to Zion.)

FACKENHEIM does not conceive of Auschwitz, or the establishment of Israel, as revelatory in the sense that Sinai was: they are "epoch-making," but not root experiences. The Babylonian exile, the destruction of the Temple, the expulsion from Spain, and the modern emancipation of the Jews were similar "epoch-making" events, in Fackenheim's terminology, drastically rupturing the orderly flow of Jewish history. True, the Holocaust was a "*novum*" in human evil, and in Jewish history. True, the establishment of the state of Israel was a historical surprise, the creative response of a people who could very well instead have been overwhelmed by mortal despair. But for all the novelty of these events, Jewish history contains other excruciating catastrophes and redemptive surprises, after which Jewish life has gone on. In a sense it may therefore be misleading to speak, as Fackenheim does, of a Jewish return to history; Jews and Judaism never left history, even though they may now be facing history with fewer illusions.

Yet in any case Fackenheim hardly intends to *celebrate* the irrevocable rupture in the events of the 1930's and 1940's; indeed, carefully threading his way between two unacceptable alternatives, he provides the basis for reasserting Jewish continuity dialectically.

There is, at one extreme, the response perhaps most memorably formulated by Richard Rubenstein, who argued in *After Auschwitz* that the millennial Jewish belief in a caring, omnipotent God was demolished by the Holocaust and that an entirely different rationale had to be erected for post-Holocaust Jewishness. For Fackenheim this way out is certainly not permissible; the permanent loss of a personal God who attends to history and answers prayer would foreshadow the end of Judaism itself. At the other extreme is recourse to one of the venerable formulas according to which the repeated persecution of the Jews is understood as punishment for their sins, or as evidence of divine testing, "the chastisements of love." This too Fackenheim can hardly accept. Rather, by rooting philosophical and religious meaning in the physical and spiritual resistance of Holocaust victims, and in the fidelity of post-Holocaust Jews to Jewish survival, he at once wrestles with the brute, inarguable facts and prepares for the eventual absorption of them into the Jewish history of salvation.

The experience of near-annihilation can act as a dybbuk on a people's soul, driving it to self-defeating acts of violence and/or immolation. By providing a subtle, eloquent, even rational response to an event which is close to being religiously inexplicable, Fackenheim has helped exorcise this dybbuk for modern Jews, reestablishing a ground for religious faith, however problematically "postmodern," however full of strains and *kivyakhols*. And by associating the full force of the memory of the Holocaust with the anxieties and elations of June 1967, Fackenheim has given powerful philosophical meaning to sentiments felt by vast numbers of his fellow Jews. In his project of turning these feelings into theory he has contributed to repairing what is perhaps the most serious of all ruptures in modern Jewish thought: that between a secular, scientific conception of Jewish experience and the primary insights, values, and beliefs of Judaism.

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En Route to the Gulag

Irina Ratushinskaya

FOR seven months now, ever since my arrest and trial, I have been living like a queen here in prison: doors are flung open before me wherever I go—into cells, interrogation rooms, the courtroom. . . . Other hands close these doors behind me, too. Not that I do much walking these days, just the odd stretch now and then along some corridor. Still, I maintain the correct regal bearing. Mostly I am driven from place to place. An impressive number of people are employed in "serving" me: just to get a pencil sharpened I summon a junior officer of the guard. Should the Queen desire to have a fresh pair of socks issued out of her personal effects, any number of minions must spring into action, including the prison governor (he has to sign all paperwork, and Her Majesty's demand for socks must, of course, be duly recorded).

The prison in which I am being held is called the Isolation-Interrogation Prison of the KGB, but during World War II, when Kiev was under German occupation, it was used by the Gestapo. Here, for the very first time in my life, I have a room all to myself. It is even furnished with a steel cot, a small night table, and a slop bucket which serves as a lavatory. All the Queen's papers, in view of their importance to the state, are regularly scrutinized by "competent persons." For this very reason, my first collection of poems written in prison is not committed to paper, but has been memorized painstakingly, word for word. In principle, heads are also subject to scrutiny in this place, but the principle has not been enforced in my case because of my very decisive "veto." This privilege was not easily won, and gives me the right to walk proudly. Make the best of it, gentlemen; such is my royal will.

Today I am leaving my Kiev residence for one in Mordovia. Today is the start of my journey to the labor camp; a van will deliver me to the station in an hour's time. All my papers, I have been told, will be sent on separately, "so that you won't have to cart them around yourself." The papers in question are my sentence, my appeal against it, my statement at my trial, my notes concerning the official record of the trial, and poems by Tyutchev, Pushkin, Shevchenko, Lermontov, and Zhukovsky, copied out of books from the prison library. Oh, well, I would probably not get a chance to read them during transportation to the camp.

I feel a slightly feverish exhilaration, as always before a journey. Of course, I know full well that this will be no ordinary trip: guard dogs, yelling guards armed with machine guns, the stuffiness and oppression of Stolypin railway cars,* the stench of transit prisons. . . . Nevertheless, my spirits are high; these first seven months have not passed too badly. They did not get so much as a word out of me under interrogation, I did not make a single plea to my captors; all they got out of me was the statement I made at my trial and a flat refusal to take part in any of the proceedings. Quite an acceptable beginning for a political prisoner. Now comes the next step—transportation to the camp. My services to the Motherland have received the highest accolade: seven years of strict-regime camps† to be followed by five years of internal exile.

The sentence came as a twenty-ninth birthday present. But I got another present on that day: my husband Igor was summoned as a witness to

IRINA RATUSHINSKAYA is a celebrated Russian poet who was arrested in 1982, at the age of twenty-eight, and later sentenced to seven years of hard labor and five of internal exile for writing and distributing "anti-Soviet" poetry. In October 1986, following an international campaign by Western human-rights agencies, she was released—two days before the Reykjavik summit. She now teaches in the Slavic department of Northwestern University and has recently published *Beyond the Limit*, her first volume of poems in English translation (Northwestern University Press). The present piece is taken from Miss Ratushinskaya's forthcoming book about her four years in Barashevo, a forced-labor camp located in the region of Mordovia. The book will be published by Knopf next month under the title, *Grey Is the Color of Hope*. English translation copyright © 1988 by Alyona Kojevnikov.

* Carriages for transportation of prisoners, introduced by Pyotr Stolypin, Russia's Minister of Internal Affairs, 1906-11. Each carriage is divided into compartments of nine cubic meters which were shared by an average of four prisoners in czarist times and twelve in Soviet times. Records exist of compartments holding twenty-nine people.—Translator's Note.

† There are four types of regime regulating conditions of imprisonment: ordinary, intensified, strict, and special. Each entails progressive reduction in prisoners' rights to visits, correspondence, supplementary food purchases, etc.—T.N.

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my trial. From the doorway, he called out to me: "Hold steady, darling, I love you!" And then, turning to the judges, he told them exactly what he thought of them and their proceedings. Among other things, he threw at them that I am a member of International PEN (news to me!) and then, just before they managed to hustle him out, one last look at me. Tell me, dear comrade judges, has anyone ever looked at you like that? Or at you, my warder-escort? Or at you, Prison Governor Petrunya? No, of course they haven't. And that is why you cannot understand how I can face the journey to the camp with a smile.

They issue me rations for the journey: half a loaf of black bread and some herring. From my former reading of *samizdat*, I know that this means twenty-four hours of travel before the first transit stop. Eating the herring is inadvisable, because it makes you terribly thirsty, and there will be nothing to drink. Thank you, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, for your priceless counsels! Who can say whether Igor and I would have had the presence of mind to burn all letters and addresses while the KGB hammered on our doors, had we not read your works? Or would I have been able to summon sufficient control not to bat an eyelash when they stripped me naked in prison? Without you, would I have grasped that cardinal principle for all prisoners of conscience: "Never believe them, never fear them, never ask them for anything"? Thanks to you, even such trivia as the business with the herring is known to me in advance. A *zek*'s* light body, a *zek*'s light bundle. . . .

The carriage is waiting, a Black Maria. Oh, well. It's April. The journey lies before me. The van is brought right up to the railway carriage, so you step straight from one into the other. A guard dog barks frenziedly somewhere below: yes, I have read about all this. Here they are, the crowded Stolypin compartments. A welter of female bodies and faces penned up in a wire enclosure measuring three cubic meters. How many prisoners can there be in here, crammed in on two tiers? About fifteen? The next such "cage" is full of men. A clamor goes up as they see me.

"Look, here's a young one!"

"Hey, sweetheart, where are you headed for?"

"Girlie, look at me!"

Someone proffers a sweet through the wire mesh. The guard lashes out, the sweet falls to the floor, and the hand is hastily withdrawn—it lacks several fingers and is covered with tattoos. The sun sets behind the hills. We all look each other over, smiling.

"No talking!"

We continue to exchange smiles. They are *zeks*, and so am I. Later, when the train gets under way and the guard is replaced by a less obnoxious one, they get him to pass me another sweet, and I reciprocate with a pack of cigarettes (I knew these must be bought before the journey, whether one smokes or not). Soon, I learn my first word of "*zek*-speak": a "warmer." A "warmer" is the acquisition of something not officially permitted, such as our exchange of a sweet for cigarettes. The first, obvious interpretation of this word strikes me immediately—something to warm the heart. A further interpretation was to come six months later: when you eat, you feel the cold less than when you are hungry. So a "warmer" can, quite literally, be calories. . . .

I have an enclosure all to myself. According to the regulations, especially dangerous state criminals must not be able to mingle with the other prisoners and exercise a bad influence on them. Who knows, ordinary criminals might just take it into their heads to stop stealing and robbing, and take to writing poetry. Or, worse still, start coming out in support of that traitor, Sakharov. In reality, however, what price isolation, when every compartment consists of three walls and a wire-mesh front? It is relatively easy, with a bit of dexterity, to pass notes through the wire from one enclosure to another, up and down the length of the carriage. And every word can be clearly heard.

"Hey, Number One, why are you traveling alone?"

Number One—that's me, because it is the number of my enclosure, right at one end of the carriage.

"I'm a 'political.'"

"Go on! Was it you, then, who took a shot at Andropov?"

"Why, has someone taken a shot at him?"

This is news to me. I was allowed no newspapers in the KGB prison in Kiev and, anyway, this is not something that would have been mentioned in the press. I went into prison under Brezhnev, and only learned from the prosecutor's speech at my trial that we were now ruled "by Comrade Andropov himself."

"You bet they did, but they missed, worse luck."

"No they didn't, he was hit in the knee." This is another enclosure joining in.

"No, I'm here because of my poems."

"How's that? Your poems were against the government, were they?"

"No, independent of the government, so they took offense."

"About God, eh?"

"About God, too."

"Yeah, they wouldn't like that. Say, how about reciting some of them? Remember them, don't you?"

How could I forget? I recite the poem I dedicated to Sakharov:

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* *Zek* is derived from the abbreviation z/k, *zaklyuchenny*, prisoner.—T.N.

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Don't attempt to coerce,
If a boy flies the nest and bereaves you—
Write it off as a loss, you exemplary homeland and nurse!
You are quick to forget how to bless your own son as he leaves you,
And instead you have learned the cruel art of pronouncing a curse!

What you put in your bread—
So that no one looks elsewhere to savor,
How you loose on the trail your swift dogs and their practical art,
And poverty, jail, and the nightmare asylum forever—

Cease to harp on those strings.
We have studied and learned them by heart.

Those with wide-spreading wings,
Who from birth have been stubborn and awkward—
Don't attempt to coerce, using bribes or the menacing word—
We're not reached by such things.
We leave and go onward and onward . . .
People say that a shot in the back simply cannot be heard.

They are all quiet, listening. Heavens, what do they make of it? These are common criminals, half of them would not have so much as read a book in their lives. On the other hand, maybe they are not all like that: how varied are the people who have passed through our prisons! These listen avidly.

"No talking!"

I fall silent without demur; it is wiser to wait until the early vigilance of our guards loses its edge. This won't take long. Some ten minutes later, a voice calls out: "Number One, you write it out and pass it along to us in Number Six, okay?" What's your name?"

"Ira."

"Start writing, Irinka!"

GENERALLY speaking, writing is a bit risky. Under Soviet law it qualifies as "dissemination of slanderous documentation in poetic form." Discovery can lead to the institution of new criminal proceedings. On the other hand, I have no intention of spending the next seven years in camp cowering in silence like a frightened mouse. That would be playing right into the hands of the KGB, whose aim is to make me fear giving my poems to anyone. As for my traveling companions—well, they are human, too, criminals or not, and I am not the Almighty to sit in judgment on them. For better or worse, they are my people, just as the young guard in his military uniform is, too. No, I shall not stoop to self-censorship.

Writing is difficult, though, because the train jerks and words jump on the paper. Better wait until the train stops. What should I write, so that they will all understand? I know—the one about the prison gnome. And something lighthearted—say, the poem about the flying cat. And the one about the old lady who waits for the return of her son. The next halt is a long one, and I cover a double sheet of paper ripped out of an exercise book.

"Girls, pass this on to Number Six, will you."

"How about something for us?"

"You can have this when they finish reading it. I can't write it all out ten times."

"Is it all right if we copy it out for ourselves?"

"Of course. But you could get into trouble if the guards find it."

"Zero is what they'll find."

"Another word out of any of you, and nobody will be allowed out to the toilet until tomorrow."

This last remark is from the guard. The threat is a weighty one. What are you supposed to do if they don't let you out of the pen to use the toilet? Moreover, trips to the toilet are regarded by the guards as a nuisance: one of them stands watch outside the lavatory, one plays sentry in the passageway, and a third must open every enclosure in turn and escort the prisoners to the toilet and back, one by one. So from the point of view of the guards, the fewer trips there are to the toilet the better, and toilet detail is kept to a minimum, driving the prisoners to desperation. The men occasionally cannot hold out and urinate into plastic bags, if there are any around, or into their boots. The women weep and wail, but hang on. However, this fair-haired youngster is clearly not one of the nasty ones, and has issued his threat simply to restore order. The women in Number Three sense this immediately: "Hey, there, my fair little soldier-boy. Why are you so cross, eh? Come here and I'll give you a kiss!"

"Behave, will you!"

"But I'm not misbehaving, am I? I'll just give you one kiss, and it will make your whiskers grow like anything. Do you want fair whiskers, or ginger ones?"

"That's enough of your chattering, you hear?"

"Oh well, if you don't want us to talk, we'll sing you a song. Come on, girls, all together now:

Valentina Tereshkova
Stupid bloody fool
Went to suck milk from a cow
But got under a bull. . . ."

"Watch it, girls, don't try my patience too far."

"We'll try you, all right, and get a bun in the oven. All the better, it means we'll get out come the next amnesty."

"Yes, we'll have nice little fair-haired girls out of you."

"Shut up, will you! The convoy commander will be coming through any minute now."

This appeal works, for the prisoners know that the young guard could get into trouble for talking to them. Everyone quiets down. In any case, it must be time to bed down now; they loaded us

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onto the train in the evening, and how much has happened since then! It would be interesting to know what time it is. This interest is purely academic: prisoners are not allowed to have watches or clocks. You are wakened when necessary and taken where necessary. How strangely reality narrows in prison. I know nothing: not where I will be tomorrow, not the direction in which I am traveling, nor what is going on there, in the outside world. I don't even know anything about Igor, whether he has been arrested or not. A month has passed since my trial, and we have not been allowed to exchange letters or see each other in that time. Where is he now? Probably getting ready to sleep, too—but where? On our folding couch at home, or on a plank bed in prison? Sleep, my dear one. May the Lord give you strength.

MORNING. The train has been stationary for several hours now. I have learned that we are being taken to Moscow, and shall arrive there only in the evening, at best. It is twelve hours by ordinary passenger train from Kiev to Moscow, but carriages with prisoners are attached to freight trains, so our journey will take at least double that time. I half-doze most of the time; this way, the hours do not drag so heavily, nor do the surroundings impinge so much on one's consciousness. There is a swell of noise in the carriage, though, which cannot be ignored: "Hey, chief! Take us to the toilet."

"Toilets aren't supposed to be used during stops."

"Well, when are we going to move, then?"

"When the time comes, that's when."

An outburst of helpless swearing among the prisoners. Who can say when the train will move again? After a while, the train finally jerks into motion.

"Hey, chief!"

The "chief" does not deign to reply. This is not yesterday's young lad; the guards have changed. This new one must be an "overtimer," one of those who remains in this job of his own free will. Though what could motivate someone to take up this kind of work for a living voluntarily is beyond me. We cannot see his eyes as he stands with his back to us. His fat cheeks, however, protrude from both sides of his head, which looks red and robust, even from the back. Does he hear the pleas of the *zeks*, or has he learned to switch off? A woman in the third enclosure is weeping, she has just about reached the end of her endurance.

"Chief! At least let the pregnant one go."

The chief doesn't give a damn about pregnant women; you can tell by that expressive back of his head.

How much time has passed? Half an hour? An hour?

"Hey, fellas! Start 'er rocking!"

Our seemingly deaf and mute tormentor reacts as if stung: "Who said that?"

But in the general uproar, it is quite impossible to determine the culprit. It was a young male voice, but there must be about seventy men in the carriage. In the next moment, I find out what that seditious call to "rock" means: the prisoners bodily start to rock our carriage. All together, in unison, throwing themselves first against one wall of their enclosures, then against the opposite one. The carriage is so packed that the results can be felt almost immediately. In this manner, the carriage can be tipped off the tracks, derailing the whole train.

The convoy supervisor comes running: "Who started this?"

Up yours, mate; the whole carriage keeps rocking. I'm doing my bit, too, in my solitary enclosure. We'll die and take you with us, you fat-faced swine! Obviously, this prospect does not appeal to him—two guards with keys appear on the double. One of them opens the enclosure in which the pregnant woman is locked. I see her as she passes my cage: a small, tearstained face, a shock of hair peeping out from under a washed-out kerchief.

The tension dies down. Keys rattle, enclosure doors bang, and my traveling companions all pass by me, half a step away, to the toilet and back.

My God, how many of them are there? I ought to keep count, for did I not promise myself, as I stepped across the threshold of my first prison cell, that I would miss nothing? That I would watch and remember everything, down to the tiniest detail? For the day would come when all this information would prove vital, and not just the emotional aspect, but facts and figures. But right now I simply cannot force myself to keep a tally: gray faces, gray clothing. . . . Only their eyes are different. They all look at me with unconcealed curiosity: a "political" is no mean title.

"How's it going, Irinka?"

I smile. Eyes looking into eyes. And another look on the way back. I stand right up against the wire. What terms stretch before you, lads? How many of you will survive the camps, how many will emerge crippled or deranged? Whom have you left behind, and will they live to see you? And how many of you actually have a place to call home? What will be the fate of the child the woman in the third enclosure will bear? What will his first words be, learned in the camp? It was only later that I found out that the average mortality rate for babies in the camps is one in eight. How much I still have to learn, despite all that I have read about prisons and camps. So this is what you are like, *zeks* of my time. Let us exchange a forbidden smile; that, too, is a "warmer."

WITH amazing sleight-of-hand, someone slips something into my pocket through the wire mesh. So adroitly is this done

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that I scarcely notice it, and the guard misses it altogether. And again. And again. A small square of paper, folded several times, falls to the floor. A note! Quickly, I cover it with my boot: like all the other *zeks*, I wear tarpaulin soldiers' boots. Only mine are smaller than the regulation issue; Igor somehow managed to get a pair in my size and passed them to me in prison. Whew! Looks like nobody saw the note. I drop my handkerchief, then scoop up the note as I bend to retrieve it. I have not yet acquired the dexterity of a *zek*. Never mind, I will learn.

When everything quiets down and the guard turns his back on us again, I start to examine my booty.

"Hello there, Irisha! My name is Volodya. My term expires in three years' time. I am very fond of poetry. My favorite poet is Omar Khayyám. Here are some of his verses that I remember by heart, I hope you like them too."

And, on a separate bit of paper, verses out of the *Rubáiyát*, closely written in tiny script (he must have written them when the train was stationary). Almost no grammatical errors. How about that! Much can be expected during transportation to the camps, but hardly something like this. Later, these verses were to be confiscated when I was searched upon arrival at Lefortovo prison, as were the Tyutchev and Pushkin poems which I had copied out and which were "traveling separately." Instead of having them returned to me, I was given a document listing them as confiscated; the document stated that these poems were found to be slanderous, ideologically dangerous, and for this reason had been destroyed by burning.

The reason for this bizarre act was not hard to guess: the Kiev KGB staff cannot be expected to know anything about literature, and they had simply decided that these poems had all been written by me. It had not occurred to me to note that this poem was written by Pushkin, or that one by Tyutchev, as I had known them from childhood. So, by courtesy of the ignorance of the Kiev KGB, I was arbitrarily elevated to genius rank: writing about the mountains of Georgia, the depths of the Siberian mines, about thunderstorms in early May. . . . Naturally, this "creativity" only served to increase the vigilance of the KGB. That's right, my bright sparks: keep your eyes peeled and your ears open; what will be, will be. In the meantime, on to the next note.

"Irinka, our names are Vera and Lyuba. We're on our way from a juvenile-offenders' zone to an adult one. We both have a year left to serve, though it's not likely we'll end up in the same zone. Write how long you've got to serve; we didn't hear when you told the others. Vera thinks you said seven years, but that can't be right, can it? Is it true that our political prisoners get sent to America in exchange for our spies that the Americans have caught? Write about your politics and pass it along to the fifth cage. All the others in here want to know, too."

"Ira, you said that there is a political camp. Is that the one where they kept Solzhenitsyn? I read his *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* when I was still free. Some of our boys say that Solzhenitsyn is a Jew, and that he has been imprisoned again. Is that true? Send your answer to the seventh, and mark it for 'The Lip'—that's what they call me."

Among the notes, I discover a caramel in my pocket. The aniline colors of its wrapper have imprinted themselves on the sweet itself in bright red and violet diamond shapes. We used to joke about these caramels in Odessa, saying that they were made of pure acetone. It melts slowly, slowly in my mouth. I will never know whose gift this is. Maybe it was slipped to me by that young, blue-eyed man with ringworm on his shaven head, or that elderly, homely-looking woman with smiling wrinkles, or that swarthy "stripey" (a term applied to those who are on special regime,* and therefore are almost certainly doomed). Whoever it was—my heartfelt thanks. This caramel is the best I have had in my life. I reply to the notes as clearly as possible. The notes themselves I destroy, for we will soon be in Moscow and that means I will be searched. I keep only verses of the *Rubáiyát*: if they find them, let them search for a *zek* called Omar Khayyám.

I AM transported through Moscow alone, in a large truck with a canvas hood. My guards are two young men, cradling submachine guns. Naturally, they are curious to know who it is they are guarding. I tell them my story. They are incredulous: "Surely not seven years plus five?"

I open a shutter in the door to catch a glimpse of Moscow. The night wind blows my hair back from my forehead. Lights. The area is unfamiliar. After a little awkward hemming and hawing, my custodians come up with an amazing offer: I'm young, so are they. Maybe I would like to have "a quickie" with whichever one of them I fancy most? There is still some way to go, and the other one will turn his back. Moreover, if I chance to become pregnant, I'll almost certainly get out of camp early, because pregnant women or women with children are usually included in the amnesties proclaimed from time to time. In fact, two amnesties are expected quite soon in connection with the forthcoming revolutionary anniversary dates.

Luckily, I have enough sense to take no offense at their generosity. When all is said and done, in their own way they honestly want to do me a good turn. As tactfully as I can, I explain that while

* Prisoners on special regime are held in cells. Theirs is the harshest of the four categories regulating conditions of imprisonment.—T.N.

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I think they are both fine specimens of manhood, I am a married woman, and faithful to my husband.

"Religious, are you?"

"Yes, I am."

To them, this is a perfectly acceptable explanation, and the subject is closed. If no—then no. They are, in fact, immeasurably more sensitive than KGB men, whose response certainly would have been: "Where's the husband who will wait for you for seven years!" How many times I heard such remarks during the seven months I spent under investigation!

My poor investigator, Lukyanenko, was at his wits' end to come up with something that would shake my composure. He never did, and finally gave up trying. After every question, without even expecting an answer, he would note down "no reply" in the protocol. But these lads—their questions I do answer, whatever they want to know. I recite poems, explain who Sakharov is. In this way we pass the journey to Lefortovo prison. They give me a pack of cigarettes and I take it, even though I do not smoke myself; they will be a welcome gift for others. After all, I am not alone any more. With whom will it fall to me to share skilly?*

At Lefortovo, after being searched, I get what is a treat for any *zek*—a shower. This is one good thing about being in transport: the prisoners have to be able to wash once a week, and I still had five days to go before my next scheduled wash. This unexpected bonus is because all incoming prisoners in Lefortovo have to be given a wash. How long will they keep me here? No use asking, of course. I have a cell to myself, thank God. Faces, shaven heads swim before my eyes. . . . I have become unaccustomed to people during seven months of solitude. KGB men do not qualify as human beings, after all! But my erstwhile traveling companions are people, even though some of them may be killers and thieves.

Our nation has always referred to those sentenced to hard labor as "unfortunates." And unfortunates they are, and I pity them, as, no doubt, they pity me. Certainly I know about the vicious camp "laws" by which criminals live, about merciless revenge, about the exploitation of the weak among them. . . . Yet there is something else to them as well—and that I will never forget. I shall try to appeal to that "something else" which exists in even the most hardened criminals, and the guards, and maybe even in that one, who has just peered in through the Judas-hole in the door to check whether I am asleep or not.

Oh, Lord, save my unfortunate people and have mercy upon them!

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* A thin swill, the staple food in the camps.—T.N.

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The River Temz

A Story

Flossie Lewis

THE switchboard is Lily's responsibility, one of them. Lily Leung is also secretary to Linda Garcia-Hernandez, the Dean of Girls and Curriculum. At 7:45 in the morning Lily is typing for the dean when the switchboard begins its morning reveille, an alarm that will not cease its call and racket for the next hour and a half. Lily heaves herself from the desk to the switchboard, a distance of three yards. She puffs; she is fat.

"Hello. Fuller High Academy, please."

"Can you put me through to Mr. Price?"

"He die. He dead. Two weeks ago."

"Oh for God's sake, Lily, Gordon Price, not Milton Price."

"Who this?"

"Mr. Tarr, for God's sake. Just put me through to the history department, will you?"

"Why? Why you get so angry?"

"Just put me through."

"They not in."

"My substitute is in. She's up there waiting for me to call."

"They not in."

"Lily, do we need another dead teacher?"

"But you say Gordon Price. He not in."

"He is. Believe me, he is. He's up there waiting for my call."

"No, he is not. He not sign in."

"Just put me through, Lily, or I'll kill you."

"OK. Keep your shirt clean."

"What!"

"I put you through."

MRS. AARON SMITHFIELD DAVIDSON, related to the people who make the ham, although Mr. Davidson is Jewish, watches Lily at the switchboard. Mrs. Davidson has an appointment with the principal, and she is waiting for him to arrive. Mrs. Davidson appears slightly stoned, although she never touches the stuff. It is just that this is not the first time she has observed Lily at the switchboard or Lily submitting to the critical supervision of Linda Garcia-Hernandez, who speaks English as well as Spanish and holds a master's degree in Russian. It is not the first time Mrs. Davidson has witnessed Lily and Garcia-Hernandez—the dean is a young woman who wears heavy eye makeup and heavy metal for jewelry—in combat, for the dean upholds the sanctity of language. The daily bulletin cannot afford six typos per line.

"Why will you not use a dictionary?"

"What?"

"You heard me. Why can't you use a dictionary?"

"Take me all day then . . . look up words . . . never get finish."

Mrs. Davidson understands. Lily Leung is a high-school graduate, and because of her language skills, or lack of them, she cannot find employment in any other sector of the economy, not even in a department store, so the good people at Central Office have given Lily to Margaret Fuller Academy, where she can do no harm. Lily puts through the call to the history department, and then answers the daily round of questions from parents wishing to know when school will be over on this particular day or the rest of the week. Margaret Fuller Academy practices flexible scheduling, so flexible it changes from day to day, but that is one reason the academy is considered alternative education. The other reason is that it caters absolutely to the college-prep crowd, three-quarters of whom are young ladies of Asian-American descent. The rest are Caucasians, with a smattering of black students and some whose names are Spanish, who actually come from Spain because their parents are in the diplomatic service or imports and exports. There are one or two genuine Latinos, say rather Latinas, because even among the young people from Mexico and Central America, the girls outnumber the boys. Girls are better students, and admission to Margaret Fuller is based on grade-point averages and reading scores.

The school, although it is a public high school, is nonetheless well endowed. Generous and wealthy parents buy the school computers, tickets to the opera, guest speakers, wandering poets, and even a collection of undistinguished watercolors by an attractive young nephew of one of the

FLOSSIE LEWIS, a new contributor, has published fiction and essays in a variety of periodicals, including *North American Review, Encounter,* and *Changing Education.*

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school-board members, who is said to be suffering from AIDS. The watercolors grace the main entrance to the academy. Mr. and Mrs. Davidson purchased the paintings. They are two of the most contributing and concerned parents, completely devoted to the welfare of the school and the students. They have two daughters at the school: Rachael Smithfield, a senior, and Rebecca Rose, a freshman. Mr. Davidson is the senior partner at Davidson, Fullerton, McQuade, and Lasky, a law firm specializing in strikebreaking.

Lily looks up from the switchboard. "Mrs. Davidson, principal just call me. He is late."

"Yes, I know."

"He be here eight o'clock."

"Yes, thank you, Lily."

The switchboard buzzes in five different places. Lily looks to heaven and Mrs. Davidson wonders to what deity Lily is looking. It is 7:45; the appointment with the principal, Mr. Lim, was for 7:35. Mrs. Davidson does not want her girls to see her in the office so early, for then they will know that something unusual is taking place. Only those parents with problems or problem children come to school so early. But if Mr. Lim delays much longer, then Rachael, who is a class officer, will surely be running into the office, where she will surely see her mother and she will surely ask to sit in on the conference. Mrs. Davidson does not want that to happen, for Rachael will make light of a situation her mother considers serious.

AT EIGHT O'CLOCK, Mr. Brendon Lim greets Mrs. Davidson via the switchboard. He says he will be with her shortly. Mr. Herman (Harry) Lee enters the office. He is Dean of Boys and Head Counselor to everyone—students, staff, even the principal. All run to Harry, who looks twenty-five but is actually forty-two. Following Harry is Maxwell Curtin, head of the English department. Curtin is gray-gray-white, bespectacled, distinguished. He wears corduroy and tweed and elbow patches. Harry wears gray slacks, a blue sweater, and blue tie. Both greet Mrs. Davidson with affection. She looks like Cher, long and languid, but she dresses modestly in white jeans and designer sweat shirts. Her air is usually dignified, for she is connected to the ham family, but she does not always know who she is. Her father was an alcoholic and drank away the family estate. One of the reasons her marriage to Aaron Davidson has been so successful is that Aaron is a "nice Jewish boy." One of the reasons she is a cauldron inside despite her seeming cool is that she is torn between loving the outcast and wanting to destroy him. The men look at their watches.

"I've been waiting thirty-five minutes," says Mrs. Davidson.

"He's probably looking up the River Thames," says Mr. Curtin.

"Oh, yes," says Harry Lee, "the River Thames, the source of our present discontent."

"You can go in now," says Lily from the switchboard. "He waiting."

"I suppose he came in the back way," says Mr. Curtin.

There is a clatter and a crash. It is the sound of Rachael Smithfield: "I'm here," she announces, breathlessly.

"I don't want you here," says her mother. "You'll be missing class."

"We never do anything anyway in that class," says Rachael, moving in behind her mother. Rachael, like her mother, is in designer togs. Unlike her mother, she is wearing a backpack and not wearing shoes. Mr. Lee is the first to notice her elegant but unshod feet. "Where are your shoes, Rachael?" he asks.

"I gave them to Glenn, who's dressing up like a girl today."

Mr. Lim has just opened the door to the inner sanctum. He is a tall man who wears his Hong Kong tailored suit with distinction. Two things detract from his elegance: his hair has been teased by a permanent wave into a "natural," and his features are not so aquiline as Mr. Lee's, who looks Eurasian but isn't.

"Good morning to one and all," says Mr. Lim. His voice is high-pitched and flute-like.

Inside his office all is rich and red—red carpet, red blotter on the desk, a gold dragon on a red wall-hanging. There are several scroll paintings, none of them very good in Mrs. Davidson's opinion. She is a docent at the local museum. Mr. Lim motions with a slight bow for Mrs. Davidson to sit in the seat of honor, a chair from his ancestral home in Canton.

There is a slight hassle after everyone is seated. Should Rachael go to class? Mr. Lim wants her to stay. Mrs. Davidson does not. Mr. Lim wins the first round. He bows to Mrs. Davidson and Rachael.

"PLEASE," says Mr. Lim, seating himself at his desk, "let's us begin."

Everyone is silent. Mrs. Davidson looks as if she wants very much to start the proceedings, but Mr. Lim is looking directly at Rachael.

"Rachael, tell us what happen with your history teacher. Your mother call me. She is upset. But I want to hear from you and that is why I send the note to your class and also invite Mr. Curtin and Mr. Lee to be with me both times. Because after I talk to you, I will call in Miss Justin. It is good to have two understanding witnesses. So speak, Rachael." He leans forward in Rachael's direction. A dictionary is open on the red blotter, as is an atlas. Mr. Curtin suppresses a smile.

"What happen with Miss Justin?"

"It's Ms."

"Of course, Ms. Justin." Mr. Lim is sympathetic to Ms. "Please go on."

"Well, it's not really all that complicated. Ms. Justin mispronounced the Thames River, and I corrected her . . . and she called me a honky brat."

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Mrs. Davidson wants to speak, but Mr. Lim persuades her with silent motions not to.

"She got angry?" asks Mr. Lim.

"Yes." Rachael shakes her mane, which reaches to her waist. She is a pretty girl. Mr. Lee smiles. Rachael waves to him.

"How should Ms. Justin say it then?" Mr. Lim proceeds. "How should she pronounce it?"

Rachael is a tad surprised. She had expected some slight reaction to being called a honky brat.

"You mean the river? The way I just said it."

"You pronounce 'Temz,' but the spelling suggest a 'th,' not a 't'; the 'a' could be long." Mr. Lim is now studying the dictionary on his desk.

"Yes," Rachael says affably, "but the English say 'Temz,' and Ms. Justin pronounces it like 'James' and 'think.' " Rachael draws out the aspirated 'th' and the long vowel, not to mock Ms. Justin, but to make clear her pronunciation.

"She pronounce it the way it looks. Can you blame her?" Mr. Lim asks. He looks first to Mr. Curtin, who looks startled, next to Mrs. Davidson, who looks amazed, and then to Mr. Lee, who looks judicious, but he is only acting. He is actually quite sad.

"Brendon," says Mr. Curtin to the principal, "Ms. Justin is teaching English. Surely an English teacher should be able to pronounce the Thames correctly."

"But English is not her major," says Mr. Lim. "History is."

Even Rachael Smithfield is startled at this news. "Does it make any difference?" she asks.

"The Thames is in the vocabulary of a history major, too," says Mr. Curtin. "Brendon, I can't believe you're serious."

"I am not so stupid as maybe I look, my dear Max," says Mr. Lim, "but we mispronounce all the time. Lily Leung is not Lily Lung. Not one of you can pronounce her name correckly. She is hurt."

Mrs. Davidson cannot keep her cool. "There is a 't' in correctly," she says.

"I do not hear it," says Mr. Lim blandly.

"Well, I don't hear Chinese vowels or tones or whatever you call them."

"That's my whole point. We mispronounce what we don't hear, what we are not uses to." Mr. Lim, still bland, has won the second round.

"But I am not supposed to know Chinese. This is a school where English is supposed to be spoken." Mrs. Davidson's voice increases in volume. She has been told by her husband and by her therapist that one cannot win an argument simply by shouting, but Mrs. Davidson is really angry. "Ms. Justin is supposed to know English," she says.

"But English is her second language," says Mr. Lim.

Mrs. Davidson's jaw falls open. Mr. Curtin looks at Mr. Lim diagnostically. Mr. Lee lowers his head and bites his lip.

"May I ask what her first language is?" asks Mr. Curtin. There is a slight edge to his voice.

"Black English," replies Mr. Lim. He is not intimidated by Mr. Curtin's edginess. "Or the black dialeck, if you prefer."

"I can't believe this," says Mrs. Davidson.

"Mrs. Davidson, admit you cannot pronounce Chinese names. Why cannot Ms. Justin have this right?"

"It's not the same thing. English is her language. Chinese is not."

"English is her second language."

MRS. DAVIDSON turns to Harry Lee. Harry Lee is intelligent as well as compassionate. Like Linda Garcia-Hernandez, he speaks several languages, and his English is impeccable.

"The real issue," he says, "is how we behave to one another in a pluralistic society."

Mrs. Davidson feels betrayed. She tries very hard not to show it.

"I know this is hard for you, Mrs. Davidson," says Harry, "but the question of a word mispronounced here and there is not important. I remember Max telling me that he used to pronounce 'misled' 'mīzled.' There are lots of words that we can read and not pronounce, even in our own language."

"I was a child when I slipped on 'misled.' I was a baby." Mr. Curtin smiles to recollect the slip. He is full of forgiveness for his own fall.

"How about 'idylls,' then?"

"Really Harry. Mispronouncing Thames is like mispronouncing Sather Gate at the University of California. Can you imagine someone pronouncing Sather Gate with a short 'a'?

"Yes, me. When I was a freshman at Berkeley."

"Hi," says Rachael suddenly to Mr. Lee.

"Hi, darlin'," he replies.

It breaks the ice a little. Rachael Smithfield is a genius.

"I think the real question is whether or not Ms. Justin is a good teacher, even if she can't get Thames right."

"The real question, Harry," says Mr. Curtin, "is an overreaction on the part of a teacher who knows she is not terribly competent."

"It isn't a question of pluralism at all," says Mrs. Davidson, still betrayed.

"Let's ask Rachael, shall we?" Mr. Lee and Rachael like each other. It is very obvious. Mr. Lim approves.

"You see, we are all friends," he says.

"Ask away," says Rachael Smithfield.

"Is Justin, Ms. Justin, a good teacher? I know she called you honky brat, but generally speaking. . . ."

Rachael reflects, but not for long. "Yes," she says. "Justin is a good teacher."

"Judas," her mother cries. "Judas."

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"Oh Mama. That's not even in the Jewish Bible."

MR. CURTIN, dazzled by this exchange, imagines that he has stumbled into a rabbit hole. Mrs. Davidson is sure she has. She feels like the Duchess, and she wants Alice's head to come off, right now. Only it's Rachael, her daughter, who is driving her to madness.

"Don't you care that she called you a 'honky brat'?"

"Of course, I care, Mama, but I could have waited until after class to criticize her."

"And she could have waited to chew you out."

"But I hurt her first."

"She's your teacher. Why should the lessons come from you on how to be a teacher?"

"Does it matter?" asks Mr. Lim.

"Does what matter?" Mrs. Davidson wants to know.

"Who set the example?"

"This is Alice in Blunderland," says Mr. Curtin. "Rachael, I have always respected your judgment, and I am certainly willing to hear why you believe Ms. Justin is a good teacher. But I must tell you that a great many of your friends and parents have complained about her teaching."

"Have you ever seen what she does to compositions?" Mrs. Davidson asks.

"At least she reads what we write and reacts."

"And every third word misspelled?"

"Nobody is perfect, Mama."

"Can we please stick to the point?" Mr. Curtin is looking at the clock on the wall. The clock never quite has the time, but it does mark the passing of the minutes. "Rachael, why is Ms. Justin a good teacher, despite the very palpable fact that she can't spell and mispronounces a great many words? The Thames is one. She can't even say perform without mixing up the consonants."

"How does she pronounce it?" asks Mr. Lim.

"Preform."

"Jimmy Carter couldn't say nuclear," says Mr. Lee. "And neither can Haig. It comes out 'nukier' or some such Chinese variation."

Mrs. Davidson looks hurt, not because he appears to be making a case for Ms. Justin, but because she is uncertain where he now stands. On whose side is he?

"Rachael, you have the floor. We are waiting," says Mr. Lim.

"Why I like Ms. Justin as a teacher," begins Rachael as if she were composing a theme. "Well, it's because she opened my eyes to racism and lots of other things. Like I didn't know how racist some of our books are, how they put down minorities and women, how everything has our point of view. I mean I loved *Invisible Man*. I cried."

"Are you suggesting that only Ms. Justin can teach *Invisible Man*?"

"You could," says Rachael with some hesitation, "but you couldn't do a good job."

"I can and have taught this book," says Mr. Curtin, "and I think I have taught it effectively."

"You can't make your class cry."

"I can make them think."

"Crying is better," says Mr. Lim.

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" says Mr. Curtin. He can take only so much of Brendon Lim. Is the man for real?

"Language, language," says Mr. Lim.

"Oh, shut up," says Mr. Curtin.

"OK. I shut up, but the problem remain, and don't forget I have nerves, too."

"I'm sorry."

"Apologies accepted. Now, where are we? Ms. Justin is a good teacher, even if she does not pronounce well. There are words and ideas we must overcome. You follow me, Maxwell?"

"No, I don't. We are losing the point."

"The point is I have M.A. and administrative credential."

"Yes, in education." Mr. Curtin wants to add, "God help us," but he resists.

"But in a language which is not my own. Give me credit. I did not learn English until I was fifteen."

"What has this to do with whether Justin is the only one who can teach black literature?"

"I think Brendon is reminding us that those who bear witness to an injustice can explain it better than those who feel it in absentia, like an abstraction."

"Precisely," says Mr. Lim.

"You are quite serious, Harry? You are suggesting that if I don't bear the scars, I can't talk about the wounds? Because if you are, that's not acceptable. The whole experience of literature is that we can walk around in another's shoes. We can experience another's pain and suffering. Am I right, Rachael?"

"It's not quite the same thing," says Rachael, biting her lower lip again.

"What are you saying?" asks her mother.

"That only Ms. Justin can teach the black experience."

"That's a lot of crap," says her mother, and to Mr. Lim, who is about to admonish her, as he admonished Mr. Curtin before, she says, "Shut up! I have the floor."

"Please," he says. "The floor is all yours."

But her anger leaves her confused. Whom shall she attack after Mr. Lim? She chooses her child because it's easier. "You are a 'honky brat.'"

Rachael fixes her with a look of lukewarm disdain.

Mrs. Davidson continues: "So you think only a Jew can teach Philip Roth or Isaac Bashevis Singer?" She directs this question to Rachael and then to Mr. Lee. But she is less certain of her position because she is married to a Jew.

"Or the Holocaust?" asks Harry Lee. His voice is firm but gentle.

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"The Holocaust?" Mrs. Davidson is suddenly triumphant. "The Holocaust? I am not Jewish. I am very, very much a Wasp, but I know all about the Holocaust. I met Elie Wiesel once, and I can tell you all you need to know."

"But how do you meet the charge of somebody like Mr. Pen or Mr. Le Pen?"

"What do you mean? Who is Le, what's his name?"

"I mean suppose you come upon someone who says the Holocaust didn't happen? Suppose there are people like that Frenchman on the far Right, who deny the atrocities."

"We have pictures. We have books. We have documents. There's proof."

Mr. Curtin is getting nearer to what Harry wants, or what Mr. Curtin thinks Harry wants: "You want a witness," he says, "a crucified witness, a bloody tattoo, a number? Nobody else will serve; nobody else can be a witness to suffering!"

"Why are you getting angry?" Harry asks this question with a certain stiffening. He is becoming irritated more than defensive.

"I am not getting angry," says Mr. Curtin, "I am just annoyed, damn it."

"Why?"

Mr. Curtin writhes. "Harry, don't play dumb or political on me. You know that Justin can't teach a damn. So she bears witness to discrimination. But she's a rabble-rouser. She hasn't any respect for dates, for facts. She's ignorant of anything but her own injuries, and except for a handful of books, she doesn't even know her black heritage."

"That isn't fair," says Rachael Smithfield, bristling.

"Can she teach Shakespeare?"

"No, but others can."

"She's an English teacher."

"She's a history teacher."

"Black history."

"That happens to be American history, too, Mr. Curtin."

"Soft, take me with you," says Mr. Curtin, and before anyone can ask, he explains that he is just remembering a line from Shakespeare, if he may be permitted this bit of reactionary behavior. "Rachael," he asks, "are you suggesting that only people of color can teach the ethnic experience in America? God help me, I'm picking up some of the jargon."

"Yes," says Rachael.

"Yes," says Mr. Lim.

"No," cries Mrs. Davidson.

"Yes," cries Rachael Smithfield, standing up from her chair and facing her mother as if she, Rachael, were about to be beheaded by order of the Empress of China for uttering a heresy. "Ethnic kids need role models."

"Then why are they all in administration?" Mrs. Davidson looks at Mr. Lim directly, and then she looks at Harry Lee, whereupon she falters a little, but she continues nonetheless. "Why don't you both go back to the classroom?"

"Why should I?" Mr. Lim is not the least bit on the defensive. He meets Mrs. Davidson's anger with blandness.

"We're looking for scapegoats," says Harry Lee. "All of us."

"I FEEL like taking Rachael and Becky and enrolling them down the street in Miss Adams," says Mrs. Davidson. She speaks almost to herself.

"They're lesbians," says Rachael, trying to shock her mother with this information.

"Oh, haven't they civil, social, and economic rights? Hasn't everybody in this damned society got rights?" Rachael has heard her father utter these statements but never her mother.

"It may be more than you can stand at the moment, Mrs. Davidson, but yes." This comes from Harry Lee.

"Things could be worse," says Mr. Lim.

Mrs. Davidson looks at Mr. Lim with loathing undisguised. "What does that mean?" she asks.

"It mean, it means, that maybe I do not pronounce correckly, Ms. Justin does not pronounce correckly, but we bring other things. We enrich other ways. We are a pluralistic society. Very simple. Changing times. You have to hang in there, Mrs. Davidson."

"I have to go to class," says Mr. Curtin, rising. He shakes Mrs. Davidson's hand. He bows to everyone else.

"Coward," says Mrs. Davidson, "you're leaving me to face the battle alone."

"I am merely trying to hold up my end of cultural diversity in our changing society. You wouldn't want me to quit now, would you?"

"Then it's all right that Ms. Justin can mispronounce Thames and misspell words and parade her ignorance as gospel, and a whole generation of kids can grow up misinformed and never make it to the university."

"But we've been misinformed all through history," says Rachael. "Shaw says it, and nobody gets angry, but when Ms. Justin says it, she's wrong."

Mr. Curtin smiles. Rachael is satisfied. Mr. Lim is not sure which "Shaw," and doesn't care, Harry Lee is silent, and Mrs. Davidson is close to tears.

"Nobody cares that Rachael has been called a honky brat," says Mrs. Davidson. "The victim has no rights?"

Mr. Curtin goes out the door. Mr. Lee rises. "Of course we care," he says sadly.

Mrs. Davidson holds him with her skinny hand. "Harry, this is pluralism? This is justice?"

"We'll talk more, I promise you," he says with great gentleness, "and I will personally have a talk with Jennine Justin." Harry kisses Mrs. Davidson. Mrs. Davidson tries for the last time, even though

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the warning bell has sounded, and she doesn't want Rachael to miss another class.

"Look," she says, "I am not opposed to kindness and consideration. That's the Golden Rule, that we should do unto others the way we would have others do unto us, but two wrongs don't make a right. This school is supposed to be college prep. We fought to have such a school. It's full of kids whose parents fought their way up from Chinatown. You know it, Harry. And you know that we just can't find enough ethnic teachers. They don't want to be in the classroom. Does that mean we take teachers who need monitoring devices every time they teach? How do we set standards, Harry?"

"We help one another and hang loose for a while," he says.

"Pronunciation change," adds Mr. Lim. "One day we will pronounce 'Temz' like Ms. Justin does, because it is the most sensible way, and then you will not be so hurt, Mrs. Davidson."

"'Bye, Mom," says Rachael Smithfield, "See you at dinnertime."

The bell rings.

LINDA GARCIA-HERNANDEZ is examining a piece of typing. Mrs. Davidson has just left Mr. Lim's office. She sits down to write something in her notebook, but she observes the scene nonetheless. Linda Garcia-Hernandez is dismayed at what she is reading. She heaves a great sigh and utters the following complaint: "Sweet Jesus, what am I going to do?" The switchboard sounds an alarm. The message is for Mrs. Davidson: Rebecca Rose will be down shortly. Mrs. Davidson thanks Lily who has decoded the message and delivered it correctly.

"Lily, when you're finished . . . ," Linda Garcia-Hernandez is calling.

"When I finish. . . . I am never finish. . . ."

"Lily, come into my office, when you finish."

"Yes, yes, yes. . . ."

Mrs. Davidson gets up to leave, but before she does, she says to Lily, "Lily, how do you pronounce your second name?"

Lily pronounces very carefully what is phonetically indescribable to Mrs. Davidson. She tries to repeat what she has heard.

"You as bad as I," says Lily. "No tone."

Mrs. Davidson smiles, but it is a puckered smile. Her heart isn't in it. She leaves the office and walks toward the Mercedes. Becky, her younger daughter, is waiting at the car. Unlike her mother and her sister, Becky is wearing short leathers and hair done up in spikes, jello-colored.

"Mama," she says, "No more dental appointments during ceramics time. Mrs. Andersen is getting pissed."

"It's an excused absence," says Mrs. Davidson. "And besides, you don't do anything in that class, anyway."

Becky Rose is into art. "Mama," she says, "That's not fair."

"Please, Becky, not another fight. Let's go."

Becky gets into her safety belt. "How did things go with the THHAIMES this morning?" she asks. News of Mrs. Davidson's conference has traveled fast.

"You mean the 'Temz.' " Mrs. Davidson is trying hard to control herself.

"Indeed," says Becky, "isn't the pronunciation of that word disputable?"

"No, just up for grabs," says her mother.

Mrs. Davidson goes through a stop sign.

"Mama," says Becky, "you were speeding."

Mrs. Davidson wants more than anything else to have a drink . . . with no "diluting Thames."

"I'm sorry," she says.

"Mama?" says Becky.

Mrs. Davidson is still thinking about Bourbon or Scotch. Neat.

"What?" she says.

"In *Macbeth* is the boy's name Sirrah?"

"What?" says her mother.

"The boy in *Macbeth*. Macduff's son, the boy who gets killed. Is his name Sirrah? That's what his mother calls him."

The light turns red and a good thing. Mrs. Davidson turns to Becky.

"What are you talking about?"

"I don't think it's his name, but I was afraid to disagree with Mr. Perelli, our student teacher."

"What's *his* ethnic background?"

"He's gay."

The light changes.

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Where Is Zion?

Edward Alexander

TO ANYONE resident in Israel during the months since the Arab uprising (*intifada*) began in December 1987, or who has followed newspaper accounts of the effects it has had on Israel's "image" abroad, it will come as no surprise that among those effects has been a conspicuous drop in the numbers of American Jews visiting the country. Some Israeli hotels have reported cancellation rates by American Jewish groups approaching 100 percent. According to one press item, numerous Conservative rabbis, planning to attend an assembly in Israel in July, cancelled their visits because "many rabbis were planning to come with tour groups from their congregations to help cover expenses. But . . . many of these tours are not coming." The few prominent American Jewish intellectuals who have kept their commitments to participate in conferences and the like have been received in Israel with a gratitude in no way diminished by their own seemingly compulsive desire to bite the hand that (very lavishly) feeds them, by publicly "testifying" against Israeli policies.

Of course, the *intifada* in its various forms has kept most Israelis too busy to worry about the mysterious absence of their American cousins. But awareness of it grows apace. As one young acquaintance of mine, just back from three weeks of reserve duty (now increased to sixty days a year) in Nablus, asked me sharply: "What are your American Jews, who are always declaring 'We Are One,' doing while we are dodging bricks and petrol bombs?"

Some of them, I answered, are dutifully reciting, for the benefit of the great American public, what the Israeli critic Gavriel Ben-Ephraim calls "the Anthony Lewis conjugation, in serialized weekly numbers: Israel will lose its soul; Israel is losing its soul; Israel has lost its soul." Others, including editors of magazines and heads of large Jewish organizations, are lining up in television studios and in print to explain why their sense of ethical idealism requires that they condemn all Israeli use of force against Arab rioters in the most forceful language they can marshal.

Still a third group—so I told the astonished young soldier—is deeply immersed in considering the special Jewish mission to Gentile America, a mission it defines as nothing less than *tikun olam*, repairing the universe. The concerns of the earthly Jerusalem, pressing though they may seem to its inhabitants, can hardly be expected to distract those who are building the heavenly Jerusalem in America.

NOW, the idea of America as a new Zion was a prominent theme of the Puritans who built the country; even the enlightened Thomas Jefferson wanted "Israel" on the seal of the United States. But recently this idea has been infused with a specifically Jewish—and also anti-Zionist—energy, and it has found articulate spokesmen in more than one sector of the ideological spectrum of American Jewry.

Thus, in March 1987, a few days after Jonathan Pollard had been sentenced to life imprisonment for spying for Israel, the scholar Jacob Neusner, who usually identifies himself as a political conservative, published an article in the Washington *Post* designed to show the absurdity of American Jews' attaching themselves to Israel when they were already walking the streets of El Dorado: "If ever there was a Promised Land, Jewish Americans are living in it." As it happens, this is the same Neusner who in a 1981 book (*Stranger at Home*) had written that "American Jewry simply does not add up to much. Its inner life is empty, its public life decadent." Yet here he was, at a particularly delicate moment in relations between Israel and the United States, praising the cohesiveness, security, prosperity, philoprogenitiveness, and "authentically Jewish voice" of the American Jewish community.

A much more ambitious attempt to relocate Jerusalem in a greener, more pleasant, and more peaceful place than the state of Israel is that of the leftist Leonard Fein, the founder and first editor of *Moment* magazine and a veteran fomenter-from-within of American Jewish agitation against Israel's government, especially when that government has been dominated by the Likud coalition. "Where is Jerusalem?" is the crucial chapter in Fein's *Where Are We?*,* a book whose title conveys the sense of befuddlement of someone lost in a troubled universe, a sense that is not belied by the text. Although Fein's stated subject is "the inner life of America's Jews," he can only approach that subject by elaborately disentangling himself from the claims of Zionism or, as he puts it, by constructing a "theory of American Jewish life" that can match that of Zionism, a "coherent ideological view with which to counter the ideological argument for *aliyah*."

Why does Fein feel compelled to guide the American Jewish community into spiritual, psychological, and political competition with the Jewish state? The answer is

EDWARD ALEXANDER *is professor of English at Tel Aviv University and at the University of Washington. His most recent book is* The Jewish Idea and Its Enemies *(Transaction Books).*

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implicit in the anecdote with which the book begins. It is a tale of 19th-century East European Zionists who believed in their moral superiority and in their ability to sustain that superiority in Jerusalem, where they would "prove that even with guns we will not become hunters." But since that time, according to Fein, and especially "in our generation, the Jews have come to power, in Israel and in America." So certain is Fein that Jews are now "an empowered people," an "empowered community," that he confidently declares, covering both American Jews and their Israeli cousins in a single possessive pronoun, "today it is no longer our physical safety that is the principal item on the Jewish agenda." Rather, the principal item is "whether, now that we have guns, we are on the way to becoming hunters." Fein formulates this supreme question in his introduction, and hands down the verdict eighty pages later: it is "now plain" that the Israelis, at least, "have come to hunt, have even perhaps become hunters." In between, he sets forth his own considered view of "Jews, God, and Judaisms [*sic*]."

FEIN presents himself as (by traditional standards) a "non-believing Jew" who takes what he likes from tradition; who does not admit the Jews to be a chosen people; who prefers anarchy to authority; who is eager to "reassure" the reader that his "references to God neither presume nor recommend belief"; and who rejects the characteristically Jewish idea of distinction that separates Jew from non-Jew, clean from unclean, man from woman.* Fein does allow that Judaism is "a religious way," but he repudiates the notion that there can be "a 'Jewish view' of this or that." His oceanic receptivity to all forms of Jewish experience, "from studying Talmud to marching with the lettuce workers," calls to mind Joseph Epstein's severe judgment that "In our age vulgarity does not consist in failing to recognize the fish knife or to know the wine list but in the inability to make distinctions."

Yet even Fein must draw the line somewhere. He too must show that he can say no to something, and he does. "I have," he writes, "set 'us' against the Orthodox . . . ." Because they have failed to see that "relativism" is the "necessary consequence" of the Enlightenment, the Orthodox force him to speak of "Judaisms, not a single Judaism." In Fein's "necessarily" relativistic Judaism, by contrast, "the question of whether or not there was a Revelation at Sinai seems to me considerably less important than the question of whether or not I was there."

But Fein's uncertainty over whether or not Sinai "happened" is in any case only a foil for his certainty that Sinai's place as a starting point for Jewish life has been wrongfully usurped by the double obsession of American Jewry with the Holocaust and with the state of Israel. It is guilt over their "shameful silence" during the Holocaust that in Fein's judgment fuels the attachment of American Jews to Israel, and it is their feelings of inadequacy in the face of the Zionist claim of Israel's centrality in Jewish life that ensure the uncritical nature of that attachment. Since, according to Fein, American Jews expect Israel to "sustain our sense of moral distinction," "we have not written of Israel's flaws in our journals or spoken of them from our pulpits." (Is this breathtaking assertion owing to simple amnesia, or to the self-deception that afflicts people incapable of dissenting from the conformity of dissent?)

Fein undertakes to cure his fellow American Jews of their sense of guilt, to remove this major impediment to their reascent to Sinai, by enlisting a distinction advanced by the Zionist thinker Ben Halpern: the distinction between merely geographical exile, or dispersion, and Exile as the symbol of a disordered condition of the universe. The Jews' physical exile and its theological meaning are by this means psychologized and universalized—"A Jew is also in Exile whether he lives in Boston or in Jerusalem"—into a condition that can never be set right by a simple return to Zion, but only by *tikun olam*, the repair of the whole universe.

HERE, then, is the real reason why American Jews are not to be seen in Jerusalem: "They stay where they are, reject the return, because they await the larger Redemption." They reject the earthly Jerusalem for the "Jerusalem that remains a yearning, answer to Exile, home." Some Israelis, unspiritual beasts that they are, have accused American Jews of falling in love with the fleshpots of the Diaspora. Not so, Fein retorts. Their love affair with Exile is less an attraction to its comforts than a Jewish thriving on "marginality" and "limited liability," symbolized for Fein by no less a figure than Woody Allen—who, considering his notoriously craven statement of dissociation from Israel in the New York *Times* last January, could hardly be a more fitting emblem of "limited liability."

One wonders, indeed, how to square Fein's celebration of Exile and "limited liability" with his insistence that American Jews are an "empowered community"; for if they are empowered, surely they must take responsibility for *something*. Are they, perhaps, to be held responsible for the actions of those among their fellow Jews of whom Fein never tires of boasting, as when he writes with pride that "more than half the delegates to the 1965 national convention of SDS . . . were Jews," and so was Mark Rudd, "and so were Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, and so were I.F. Stone and Noam Chomsky and Herbert Marcuse, . . . and so were William Kunstler and Leonard Boudin"? Any nurse who has ever lifted a bedpan has done more for *tikun olam* than all the world-betterers listed by Fein. This whole sorry discussion should put us in mind of the young idealist who asked Thomas Carlyle how best to go about the task of reforming the

* The sexual boundary is particularly galling to Fein, who has tried to placate Big Sister by writing his book in Feminese. Not only does he strive for equal-opportunity pronouns—"his/her," "he/she"—in dealing with mere mortals; he even urges us "to love God whether or not He (or She, or It) exists."

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world, and was told: "Make an honest man of yourself, and then there will be one rascal less in Scotland."

CONTEMPTUOUS of American Jewry's "obsession with survival," insistent on a specifically American Judaism based on "values" congruent with American Left-liberalism, Fein has resurrected for the 1980's (and more specifically for the election year of 1988) a suitably updated version of the "mission" theology of 19th-century Reform Judaism, according to which the Jews have a moral duty to carry the universal ethical content of their religion to a world that has not yet realized the culture of monotheism. Only that mission, argued the Reformers (in a bogus theology that has been exploded a thousand times over*), justifies the continued existence of Jews as a religion and a culture. For Fein, too, this mission remains the only acceptable *raison d'être* of future Jewish existence. "It is unlikely the Jews can survive, and *it would be unseemly if they did* [emphasis added], except as a community organized around values and committed to *tikun olam*," he writes in perhaps the most presumptuous formulation in this book.

To this does liberalism always seem to come with respect to the Jews. Only they must serve a higher meaning, a "mission," if they are to be permitted to carry on. When Orthodox Jews assert, "This is *the* way," Leonard Fein is profoundly offended; but he for his part does not hesitate to specify the only admissible grounds for the survival of a people who may, just may, wish to go on living without being able to articulate or "justify" this mysterious urge. "Political activism," "Lofty utopian ambitions," Liberty, Equality, Fraternity/Sorority—or Death: such is Leonard Fein's ultimatum to the American Jewry he has come to rescue from the clutches of Israel.

To recover the real meaning of *tikun olam*, a meaning grossly distorted not just by Leonard Fein but by a host of current exploiters, one can do no better than to turn to the theologian Emil Fackenheim.† *Tikun*, a notion of some intricacy, refers not to the crude utopianism of a Leonard Fein (anyway a mere cover for a highly specific politics) but to a mending of what has been broken, a reunion of ruptured historical and cosmic realities. In *To Mend the World* (1982) Fackenheim, while eschewing any attempt to "justify" the Holocaust retrospectively, asks what sort of *tikun* might repair that catastrophic rupture:

> What then is the *tikun*? It is Israel itself. It is a state founded, maintained, defended by a people who—so it was once thought—had lost the arts of statecraft and self-defense forever. It is the replanting and reforestation of a land that—so it once seemed—was unredeemable swamps and desert. It is a people gathered from all four corners of the earth on a territory with—so the experts once said—not room enough left to swing a cat. . . . It is a City rebuilt that—so once the consensus of mankind had it—was destined to remain holy ruins. And it is in and through all this, on behalf of the accidental remnant, after unprecedented death, a unique celebration of life.

This *tikun*, far from being "parochial" or "particular," has within it the potentiality of being a true *tikun olam*, because the Holocaust "called into question not this or that way of being human, but all ways." It is no exaggeration to maintain that to mend that rupture would be to offer consolation and hope to the whole world.

SOME of the practical consequences of having Jews carry their utopian zeal into the public square have been suggested in a recent debate between Fein and Milton Himmelfarb on "The New Jewish Politics." (The debate took place at this year's annual meeting in New York of the American Jewish Committee.) Himmelfarb urged that Jewish voters recognize themselves as, among other things, a special-interest group, and vote accordingly. Noting that in recent electoral campaigns the Democratic party has "conspicuously refused to be anti-anti-Semitic"—by refusing, that is, to utter a word that might be construed as critical of Jesse Jackson—he warned that a failure by Jews to react strongly to such provocation would be "pretty near suicidal for the American Jewish community."

Fein, for whom Jewish history follows an arrow-straight course from "Sinai" to the left wing of the Democratic party, responded to Himmelfarb by urging Jews "not to vote just on the basis of narrow interests." (It was, of course, just their ability to rise above their "narrow interests" and give their unstinting support to Franklin D. Roosevelt that led to what Fein himself, in *Where Are We?*, terms the "shameful silence" of American Jews during the Holocaust; needless to say, this is a contradiction he neglects to explore.)

Himmelfarb's view of the conflict between Jewish liberalism and Jewish pragmatism in America is expressed more fully in a little volume titled *Jews in Unsecular America*,** which contains the edited proceedings of a conference held in 1987 under the auspices of the Center for Religion and Society. Of the many shrewd things Himmelfarb has to say both in his formal address and in the ensuing discussion, perhaps the shrewdest is his insight into the apparently incurable tendency of Jewish liberals to allow ideology to drown prudence and common sense, whether the issue at hand is school prayer, or Israel, or abortion, or welfare. He notes that three out of four Jews polled in 1984 supported govern-

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* "Prior to the time of [Moses] Mendelssohn . . . I challenge you to produce a single Jewish text . . . in which the idea of a state of universal social justice is more than a marginal concern or messianic afterthought; and I challenge you to find *anywhere* the concept of a Jewish mission to help bring about such a state. Nothing in fact could be further from the traditional Jewish mentality, which has always looked upon the Gentile world as an arena of blindly chaotic and idolatrous forces. . . . One might as well seek to pacify earthquakes and floods. In such a view . . . social justice in the world is anything but the proper worry of a Jew." Hillel Halkin, *Letters to an American Jewish Friend* (1977).

† For a fuller discussion of Fackenheim's thought, see "Judaism According to Emil Fackenheim" by Robert M. Seltzer, beginning on p. 31 of this issue—ED.

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ment programs of welfare and food stamps, even though two out of three believed that these programs have many bad effects on the very people they are supposed to help. These are Jews whom Fein, using a repellent expression which means exactly nothing, repeatedly calls "caring" people—i.e., do-gooders who think they are doing good when they feel good about what they are doing.

THE conference took off from the premise that any assessment by the Jewish community of its relation to society at large must begin with the recognition that (as the editors put it) America is "incorrigibly and increasingly religious," and that "the religion in question is overwhelmingly Christian." The Christian participants in the conference, including evangelicals, genuinely wished to hear Jews speak to them *as Jews* about their relation to American society. The most striking response to their request for instruction came from Rabbi David Novak, a spokesman for traditional Judaism and—probably to the surprise of many—a spokesman as well for the idea of the "Mission of Israel" within America.

Novak recalls that this Reform idea, at first strengthened among some American Jews because of its resemblance to the "Social Gospel" of certain Protestant groups, eventually lost favor and was discredited because it always trailed obediently after liberal political programs whose outlook was wholly secular. Neither was it helped by the fact that nearly all its advocates were anti-Zionists. But now, Novak maintains, something like the Mission of Israel has emerged among the most traditional Jewish thinkers in America, although they avoid using the slogan.

Whereas the liberal Fein derides traditional Judaism because "it ignores the circumstances, the culture, the consciousness of each generation," Novak insists not only on its capacity for doctrinal development but on the genuine concern of traditional Jews with the moral and spiritual life of the general society. Although such Jews remember that "the *raison d'être* of Judaism is not to teach the Gentiles but to obey God's Torah, whether the Gentiles are interested in it or not," they are now (he argues) a sufficiently integral part of America to formulate opinions on issues of public debate and thus to help America develop along "ethical and religious lines that are not antithetical to Judaism's *theocratic* view—namely, that the revealed Law of God is to be the basic norm for every society."

Novak sees clearly that the Judaism espoused by the Enlightened Jew, eager to diffuse light among the nations, was not Judaism at all, but the particular mode of egress he had chosen from Judaism: specious theories, seductive utopias, new idols. It is, instead, only by being true to themselves, which for Novak means being true to the recognition that ethics is law and cannot be removed from theology, that Jews can expect to be taken seriously by American Christians and aid in bolstering democracy by means of shared religious values.

Unlike Fein, Novak is thus not impelled to invent a specious theory of American Jewish life, and he is certainly not impelled to do so mainly for the purpose of fending off Zionism. Nevertheless, he too must understand that the very notion of a special Jewish mission in America—even if that mission is defined more modestly, honestly, and cogently than liberals past and present have been wont to do—cannot help drawing Jews away from Zionism and Israel. Where the liberal Jewish missionaries are busy offering prophetic visions of freeing the oppressed and clothing the naked, the traditional Jewish missionaries offer lessons, drawn from experience, about "the danger of depersonalization," "the danger of deculturization," the dialectic between faith and history. Neither the one nor the other seems much interested in putting on the "new agenda" (a phrase used with alarming frequency by these writers) that form of *tikun olam* adumbrated by Fackenheim, a mending of the world that begins in the earthly Jerusalem.

MEANWHILE, as all this missionary activity is being planned by some Amercan Jews for the benefit of their fellow-citizens in the spiritual Jerusalem, the earthly Zion is burning, not metaphorically but literally. Several times in his book Fein subscribes to the metaphor of Jews as "a family," yet when he quotes his favorite passage from Isaiah 58 he emphasizes only the socially visionary lines about clothing the naked and feeding the hungry, not the line that follows them: "And not to ignore your own kin." To anyone who truly believes that American Jews belong to the same family as Israeli Jews, the text to be pondered today is not Isaiah 42:6 ("I have given you as . . . a light to the nations") but Song of Songs 1:6: "They made me a keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard I have not kept!"

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Virgil Thomson & Musical Taste

Samuel Lipman

LONG life can be a burden; it can also be a delectation, for oneself and others. In the case of the American composer and critic Virgil Thomson, the immense pleasure both taken and given over the course of a lifespan that exceeds the bounds of our century has always been evident, in his jaunty and touching musical compositions no less than in his writings.* A newly released collection of Thomson's letters† allows us to taste some of that pleasure for ourselves.

Thomson was born in 1896 in Kansas City, Missouri. Educated at Harvard just after World War I, he went to Paris in the early 1920's, where he studied with the redoubtable Nadia Boulanger, then and for some years later the *doyenne* of American composers. For most of the interwar years, he remained in France composing music, only returning to settle permanently in America with the fall of France to the Nazis in 1940. Once at home he became the chief music critic of the New York *Herald Tribune,* then at the height of its literary quality and influence.

To the surprise of the musical world, Thomson left the *Herald Tribune* in 1954, and since then he has lived as a composer. Today, hard of hearing but still composing a bit and writing an occasional article, he remains at the age of ninety-one a visible presence in what little remains of cultivated musical and artistic life in New York.

Thomson's elegant and witty music, always marked by a curious mixture of nostalgia and adventure, never fails to delight. Some of it, indeed, does a great deal more. Pride of place is occupied by his three operas—*Four Saints in Three Acts* (1927-28), *The Mother of Us All* (1947), and *Lord Byron* (1961-68). Of these, the first two are both settings of texts by his friend and collaborator Gertrude Stein; though they have never been mounted under first-class institutional auspices, they have nevertheless turned into something close to American folk-opera classics. The third, though unsuccessful with the critics, has left a strong impression on those few operagoers who have had the good fortune to see it produced.

Whatever the differences in style among the Thomson operas, all three are memorable, both in the stage pictures they present and in their affecting melodic and harmonic union of text and music. *Four Saints,* set in medieval Spain, is distinguished for its lighthearted, Gallic combination of Baptist hymn tunes, Stein's linguistic experimentalism, and (as a partially original-cast recording attests) the ravishing timbre and clear diction of the Negro voices Thomson selected for the work's first performances in 1934. *The Mother of Us All,* completed after Stein's death in 1946, tells the story of the American suffragette Susan B. Anthony, and along the way brings in various historic personages in addition to the librettist and composer themselves; the music is a heartwarming evocation of rural and small-town Americana, with its (in the composer's words) "gospel hymns and cocky marches, its sentimental ballads, waltzes, darned-fool ditties, and intoned sermons." In *Lord Byron,* Thomson treats of an altogether more romantic world, in which the poet's troubled life and bountiful gifts are set against a background of aristocratic and literary England; Thomson's music, in its use of a comfortable Victorian musical ethos redolent of folk and parlor songs, creates a Byron conformable to our (or perhaps our grandparents') imaginings.

Chief among Thomson's orchestral works are the Lew Christensen ballet, *Filling Station* (1937), and scores for two Pare Lorentz films, *The Plough that Broke the Plains* (1936) and *The River* (1937), and for the Robert Flaherty film *Louisiana Story* (1948). He has also written a cello concerto, two symphonies, many choral pieces and songs, some piano and chamber works, and a host of occasional music. The film scores, much admired when first released, are heard from time to time in concerts devoted to lighter contemporary music; his other works are revived whenever musicians wish to present American music both recognizably of the 20th century and at the same time predictably attractive.

MUCH of Thomson's fascinating life and musical career is documented in the excellent new collection of letters, for which the editors have also supplied invaluable linking material and short but necessary identifications of the people involved. Like Thomson's 1966 memoirs (which the letters supplement but, of course, do not replace), this selection from a voluminous correspondence, amount-

SAMUEL LIPMAN, COMMENTARY's *regular music critic, is the author of* The House of Music *and* Music After Modernism *and the publisher of the* New Criterion.

* Much of Thomson's music criticism is collected in three volumes, *The Musical Scene* (1945), *The Art of Judging Music* (1948), and *Music Right and Left* (1951). A selection from these books, with later material added, is contained in *Music Reviewed 1940-1954* (1967). Thomson's account of the way the art looked before World War II appears in *The State of Music* (1935). A book of memoirs, called simply *Virgil Thomson,* appeared in 1966. His important history, *American Music Since 1910,* was published in 1971. A generous sampling of his writing in all genres is in *A Virgil Thomson Reader* (1981).

† *The Selected Letters of Virgil Thomson,* edited by Tim Page and Vanessa Weeks Page, Summit Books, 413 pp., $24.95.

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ing to some 25,000 items, tells of a life in Europe and America among musicians and intellectuals and among the glamorous, the rich, and the supportive.

Like Thomson's memoirs, too, the letters are full of quotable material, for whether in public or in private, Thomson has never been one to hide his opinions. His eye developed early: on his first trip to France in 1921, he notes, in a letter to his sister which presages his future musical aesthetics, that French art is based in the visual values of the French countryside. He had a clear eye, too, for the social scene surrounding modern French music of the early postwar years, as when he describes the crowd at *Le Boeuf sur le toit,* a Paris bar named after Darius Milhaud's jazzy 1919 ballet:

> English upper-class bohemians, wealthy Americans, French aristocrats, lesbian novelists from Rumania, Spanish princes, fashionable pederasts, modern literary & musical figures, pale and precious young men, and distinguished diplomats towing bright-eyed youths.

And even as a young man he was never shy about discussing his own worth. Of the already sainted Nadia Boulanger he wrote in 1926, ". . . she doesn't understand me. She only recognizes, which after all is a lot." More than a decade later, congratulating Aaron Copland on the appearance of *What to Listen for in Music* (1939), Thomson ends by saying that his own book (*The State of Music*) "gets toward being finished. I like it better than yours. I only hope it sells as well."

Without doubt, the most interesting letters in this collection come from the fourteen years, beginning in 1940, that Thomson was at the *Herald Tribune.* In snappy missives directed to friends and inquiring or carping readers, Thomson provides a running commentary on the daily thoughts of a critic. Sometimes the letters stake out a position that even Thomson, always a courageous man, must have found too provocative or too personal for publication. This was perhaps the case when Thomson wrote in 1951 to Frank Stanton, for many years the president of CBS, about the plight of serious culture on the air:

> Here [referring to a then-popular radio quiz show] is the $64 question, Mr. Stanton. Does chain radio accept any obligation to offer cultural matter to the cultured minority? One musical number of the kind, and that a rather broadly conceived one, seems to be considered enough for prestige. . . . You have given us music; and now, little by little, you are taking it away. Certainly television, a visual medium, is not going to do anything serious about music.

Thomson's words, written at a time when radio was still strong and television was only in its infancy, seem both trenchant and prophetic, and applicable today to nonprofit and commercial media alike.

THEIR own individual interest aside, the great virtue of Thomson's letters is that they will properly send many readers back to his music criticism, and it is there that I too now wish to turn. As a critic, Thomson shares with James Gibbons Huneker (1857-1921) the rare distinction of having formed sophisticated American musical taste. Huneker, around the turn of the century, changed audience preferences from the classics to Richard Strauss and other European late Romantics; Thomson, at least for the time in which he was writing, during and after World War II, shifted that taste away from German to French (and American) music and performers.

It is never clear just what makes for influential music criticism. Knowledge counts, but it is certainly not all, for pedants remain pedants even when supplied with writing implements. Being right counts, but it too is not everything, as countless yards of iterative ratification of the masters by nameless scribblers over the past two centuries amply prove. Passion counts, even when, as in the case of the late American critic B.H. Haggin, with his adoration of a limited number of works and performers, the objects of passion prove idiosyncratic. Being lively—which is perhaps just another way of describing the presence of a personal element—is still more important in a critic's survival, as one can see in the fascinating but often spectacularly wrong-headed writings of J.H. Davison, the long-time critic of the London *Times* in the middle of the 19th century,* or in the case of George Bernard Shaw who, without very much formal background, and writing as a wit among the artists, managed to make an immortal reputation as a music critic.

It would seem that a critic is in a position to exercise the greatest influence when he is at the same time knowledgeable, right, and lively. Such indeed was the case with Thomson in his years at the *Herald Tribune.* To put last-named things first, the liveliness of his style—quirky, endearing, and seeming to arise both out of the music he loved and out of the deepest sources of his personality—is perhaps best illustrated in quotation, of which more below. As for knowledgeability, though in his music he often liked to assume the pose of a naif, Thomson was in fact a highly schooled and competent professional, the product of a rigorous education, both at Harvard (in the classes of Archibald T. Davison and Edward Burlingame Hill) and in France with Nadia Boulanger. He was also a skilled organist, and a conductor well qualified to lead orchestras through the often hidden complexities of his own compositions.

To Thomson's musical knowledgeability must be added his broad culture, derived not simply from his education but from his abiding curiosity about contemporary intellectual, artistic, and social life both in his adopted France and in his native America. He never treated his musical knowledge as an arcane possession, to be savored in private or with an inner group of the like-minded. Instead, he used his newspaper articles less as vehicles for his own recommendations —though, unlike today's breed of cautious relativists, he never left readers in doubt as to his own

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* Extended passages from this cantankerous critic's writings may be found in *The Music Monster,* by Charles Reid, published in England in 1984. I have written about Davison in "When the Critic Criticized" (*New Criterion,* October 1985).

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tastes—than as opportunities to educate the general reader about the panorama of modernist musical composition, the technical aspects of instrumental and vocal performance, and even the tangled relationships among art, philanthropy, and commerce that affect the music the public hears.

But what about Thomson's musical verdicts? Viewed from what is now almost a half-century after he began work on the *Herald Tribune,* they hold up astonishingly well. Just as one is immediately convinced in reading his collected criticism that Thomson is fully functioning as an accurate, comprehensive, and insightful reporter of the musical scene, so one finds that judgment after judgment strikes a resonance in one's own personal experience of the music in question. This is perhaps especially the case when it comes to opera, an area in which Thomson's contribution is sorely missed today.

As a composer of important works himself, Thomson had a particular eye for the relation between singing and acting. Writing as he did in an era of opulent voices, he understood well that in opera, singing is the thing, and that emphasis on the communication of elements extraneous to the operatic work itself violates the necessary conventions of the medium:

> Half the trouble [he wrote in 1944] with our younger singers at the Metropolitan Opera . . . is that nobody told them they do not have to do anything on a stage but the role they are acting. The art of acting is not especially recondite. The chief techniques involved are speaking and singing, and those can be perfected by study. For the rest, a simple understanding of the motives and the sentiments implied by the text will do wonders toward creating a convincing interpretation. But any assertion, conscious or otherwise, of one's own personality and still more the attempt to add a fabricated platform charm to dramatic characterization will diminish the force of dramatic impact and destroy the illusion that is the basic reality of the stage.

In these few words is contained all that is needed to answer the present wave of psychological and Marxist interpretation of operatic classics, as well as today's emphasis on acting and movement which serves mostly as a means of camouflaging vocal insufficiencies.

IN GENERAL, Thomson scores highest as a critic in judging performers (as against composers). In many cases, what he wrote about particular performances so many years ago can be verified by recourse to contemporaneous recordings of broadcast concerts. To test this recorded evidence against Thomson's descriptions of the wildly successful appearances of such admired figures as the violinist Jascha Heifetz ("machine-tooled finish and empty elegance something more than just a trifle vulgar") and the pianist Vladimir Horowitz ("He never states a simple melody frankly") is to appreciate with a shock the intellectual and moral courage of a music critic who demanded of celebrities more than mere celebrity.

In dealing with younger performers, Thomson's touch was almost frighteningly sure, not just for the moment when his judgment was entered but in light of the future careers of these talents as well. Such certainly is the case with his description of a 1947 concert of the Boston Symphony in Carnegie Hall, conducted by the then twenty-eight-year-old Leonard Bernstein:

> What seems to be beyond question in Mr. Bernstein's case is that he is a real interpreter. His orchestral hand is still young and a little heavy, and sometimes his personal projection is overweening. But his is a real temperament for making music. What he conducts rarely sounds beautiful to a sensuous spirit. And his musical culture is far from mature. But you can listen to him. That is the first and last test of any interpreter.

Thomson's 1944 endorsement of the harpsichordist Wanda Landowska is stamped with a similar rightness:

> There does not exist in the world today, nor has there existed in my lifetime, another soloist of this or any other instrument whose work is so dependable, so authoritative, and so thoroughly satisfactory. From all points of view—historical knowledge, style, taste, understanding, and spontaneous musicality, her renderings of harpsichord repertory are, for our epoch, definitive.

Thomson was by no means an unalloyed admirer of the conductor Arturo Toscanini, finding him often lacking in personality and therefore musically unsatisfying. And yet when the occasion called for it, he could back off and take a longer look at this historically great figure. Thus in an article written on Toscanini's eightieth birthday in 1947, he draws a distinction between missing the point of a particular piece of music—which he thought Toscanini often did—and the ability, which the Italian conductor so brilliantly possessed, to put one's life into one's work:

> He never lets his audience down nor lets music down. . . . Where he does not fail is in the ability to call forth on any platform the full resources of his own musical interest and attention.

IT IS, of course, not always easy to separate a critic's judgments from his tastes, and as I have already noted, Thomson made no secret of his own tastes in musical performance. Above all, he had only a limited amount of interest in and sympathy for German-trained performers, despite his recognition of their command over a major component of the repertory. Thus, in *Music Reviewed,* the most compendious collection of Thomson's criticism, only one review is to be found of the pianist Artur Schnabel, dubbed by New York *Times* critic Harold C. Schonberg "the man who invented Beethoven" and the idol of New York's émigré music-lovers from Central Europe. Thomson's review, furthermore, is distinctly unenthusiastic:

> For all the consistency and logic of his musicianship, there is too large a modicum of late-19th-

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> century romanticism in Mr. Schnabel's own personality to make his Beethoven—who was, after all, a child of the late 18th—wholly convincing to musicians of the mid-20th.

And Thomson goes on to describe exactly how this (for him) stale romanticism was reflected in Schnabel's performance of Beethoven:

> Mr. Schnabel does not admit, or plays as if he does not admit, any difference between the expressive functions of melody and passage work. The neutral material of music—scales, arpeggiated basses, accompanying figures, ostinato chordal backgrounds, formal cadences—he plays as if they were an intense communication, as if they were saying something as important as the main thematic material. . . . This equalized expressivity ends by making Beethoven sound sometimes a little meretricious as a composer.

Here Thomson was making a powerful attack on the basic tenet of German Romantic music-making, a tenet identified in our time with the cult of the recordings of Wilhelm Furtwängler: the idea that every note of great music can, and must, be made to express not just beauty but *meaning*, that just as a drop of water might be thought to contain in it the secrets of the universe, every musical sound provides a key to the significance of all of music, if not all of life. To this German worship of expressivity, Thomson counterposed an altogether more modern and at once more refined and hard-edged notion, whose roots were to be found in the music-making traditions of France and, latterly, the United States.

France was a country for which Thomson reserved a special place in his aesthetic consciousness. It had been his mentor, and, through the pedagogic ministrations of Nadia Boulanger, the mentor as well to more than one generation of American composers, including Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, and Elliott Carter. Thomson loved French music and he loved French performers, and he propagandized openly, tirelessly, and effectively for both, and hence against that concentration on German performers and German masterpieces which marks our concert life to this day. (He was, however, a warm admirer of both Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern. Schoenberg's compositions he called, in a compliment, "real modern music"; Webern's, "star dust and spun steel.")

JUST what were the qualities Thomson admired in French music-making, qualities that he did not find in the German tradition—and that he wished to bring to his native country? Simply put, in French music Thomson relished the absence of philosophical "meaning"—with its accompanying risk of bad taste—and the presence instead of what one can only call *douceur de vivre*. These were the qualities he found in Mozart, to the playing of whose piano music Thomson devoted many hours just before leaving France in 1940. Closer to our time, he found these qualities alive in France in the music of Fauré, Debussy, Ravel, Poulenc, and Milhaud, and, perhaps quintessentially, Erik Satie (1866-1925). In Thomson's estimation, Satie's compositions were

> . . . as simple, as straightforward, as devastating as the remarks of a child. To the uninitiated they sound trifling. To those who love them they are fresh and beautiful and firmly right. And that freshness and rightness have long dominated the musical thought of France. . . . It has valued . . . quietude, precision, acuteness of auditory observation, gentleness, sincerity, and directness of statement.

If in French music-making Thomson admired the qualities of simplicity and directness, of true refinement, in American music-making at its best he admired the qualities of clarity and force. These, too, he was always ready to defend against what he considered the outmoded German style. Just how far Thomson was willing to go in this regard is shown in a 1948 review of the American pianist Webster Aiken, who had been a student of Schnabel as well as of the much more literal-minded German virtuoso Emil von Sauer. Aitken ended his Town Hall recital with the same work with which Schnabel had closed his 1944 recital: Beethoven's last sonata, opus 111, in C minor. For Thomson the issue was not one of "authenticity," but of how the music should be played in our time:

> . . . Mr. Aitken gave a reading not at all traditional but one studied in the light of tradition. He did not moon over the easy slow passages or slow up for the hard fast ones, as is customary. He gave the whole a rhythmic structure and an emotional progress. . . . The piece sounded a little hard, but we are told Beethoven played like that. And its hardness was of crystal and granite, not that of stale Christmas cookies. Mr. Aitken is the most masterful of all our American pianists, and his musical culture is the equal of anybody's from anywhere.

This last sentence is not just a tribute to a younger pianist, but a provocative and even defiant declaration of American musical independence. For Thomson, indeed, that declaration applied to American composition no less than to American performance. Though he could hardly have realized the disappointing future that lay ahead, he never missed an opportunity as a critic to proclaim his pride in our native music. One of his most forceful statements of his position may be found in a 1946 *Herald Tribune* article in which, always excepting France, he claims something approaching world leadership for American music as it existed at the end of World War II;

> Actually we are producing very nearly the best music in the world. Only France, of all the other music-exporting countries, operates by stricter standards of workmanship and of originality. Not Germany nor Italy nor Russia, nor England nor Mexico nor Brazil is producing music in steady quantity that is comparable in quality to that of the American school. And we are a school. Not because I say so, but because we have a vocabulary that anybody can recognize, I think, once it is pointed out, as particular to us.

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Within the "school" of American music, Thomson's tastes were catholic. In his 1966 history of American music, he took the time to write pithy and appreciative, though never smarmy, accounts of the work and lives of a great number of American composers. He paid the required tribute to the established American masters, among them Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, and the still-ignored Carl Ruggles; he had kind words to say about the Oriental-influenced Colin McPhee and Lou Harrison, and about the underappreciated modernists Irving Fine and Leon Kirchner.

OVERALL, Thomson's preferences in his own country's music, as in that of Europe, were for more decorative and less weighty compositions. Thus he vastly admired the music of Paul Bowles, so influenced by travel in North Africa, while he found that the ultra-serious and dense music of Roger Sessions, for all its excellence, "occasionally stumbles over its own coils." For Henry Cowell, so often derided as a well-meaning amateur experimentalist, Thomson had praise:

> His music is not complex, but it sings. It is not highly polished, but it has structure. It is not strikingly ambitious either, but it has presence. And never is it bogus or vulgar or stupid or falsely inspired.

Thomson's attitude toward truly avant-garde American music—of the kind characterized by indeterminacy, electronics, and nonmusical sounds—was curiously ambivalent. He looked sympathetically on John Cage, perhaps the archetypal American leader of what might appear to some as tomorrow's music, although ultimately he had serious questions about the music and the influence of this aging *enfant terrible:*

> Cage's aim with music, like Samson's in the pagan temple, has long been clearly destructive. . . . The young, moreover, seem to be yearning nowadays after a messiah. . . . Indeed, Cage's rigid schedule of beliefs and prophecies, his monorail mind and his turbine-engined, irreversible locomotive of a career all make it easy for the young to view him as a motorized and amplified pied-piper calling out, "Get on board-a little children; there's room for a million more."

WE LIVE today in a musical world ruled even more by the worship of masterpieces—most of them still German—than was the world Thomson faced when he came back to America in 1940 to be a critic. There is no point in denying, nor would Thomson have done so, the greatness of the music of the great masters; they are the very stuff of civilization, and will continue to provide the formative experience of anyone concerned with serious music for the foreseeable future. But as true as this is, and just because it is true, Thomson's efforts to open up the musical repertory and lighten its texture by providing variety and contrast seem today, in our masterpiece-ruled environment, even more needed than before. For in the French and American music he so brilliantly espoused—and in much of the music he himself wrote—lies a context for new ways of playing and hearing those same masterpieces themselves.

It is one of the particular glories of French and American music of the years 1920-60 that it lends rhythmic sparkle and melodic life to every program it graces. Indeed, the programming of this music now seems as much an act of homage to the masterpieces whose omnipresence Thomson attempted to cut back as to the music whose cause he pleaded with such style and eloquence.

IN 1950, writing a *Herald Tribune* retrospective on the music of the first half of the century—he ultimately had little good to say for it—Thomson found room at the end to discuss his own work as a critic in relation to that of his predecessors. There, this man who has always been conscious of his worth showed also how capable he is of humility:

> As for Sunday articles, they are written nowadays by people like me. In the early years of the century the critical fraternity contained Ernest Newman, a better historian, and Claude Debussy, a better composer.

But, then or anytime, one can be sure that the "fraternity" did not contain a better *critic* than Virgil Thomson, or a more passionate and persuasive advocate of the music he loved and to which he devoted his critical life.

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Celebrating to the Limit

FEAR NO EVIL. By NATAN SHARANSKY. Translated by STEFANI HOFFMAN. *Random House. 437 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by FERNANDA EBERSTADT

OF GADFLIES born to make an alien tyrant's life hell, few have been as high-spirited, or as resilient, as Anatoly (now Natan) Sharansky, the Soviet Jewish human-rights activist who in 1986, by dint of a nine-year international campaign conducted by his wife Avital, was released from the gulag to liberty in Jerusalem. *Fear No Evil* is Sharansky's account of his life, first as a privileged and quiescent Soviet citizen and then as a "refusenik" (a Jew denied an exit visa to Israel), of the activities which led up to his conviction in 1978 for "espionage," and of his near-decade in the Soviet prison system. As such, this memoir also simultaneously bears witness to a truly astonishing passage in recent Jewish history: the rebirth of religious and national consciousness among an entire generation of young educated Soviet Jews.

Sharansky's career is in many ways emblematic of the movement. Born in the Ukrainian city of Donetsk in 1948—a year which saw the birth of the Jewish state and Golda Meir's explosive arrival in Moscow as Israel's first ambassador to the Soviet Union, as well as the murder on Stalin's orders of the great Yiddish actor and director Solomon Mikhoels—the young Sharansky was an assimilated and highly skeptical chess prodigy and computer specialist whose sole consciousness of his Jewishness, by his own account, derived from his experience of personal and institutional anti-Semitism. He chose mathematics, he writes, as a "castle" buttressing him against the state's interference in his life.

It was Israel's victory in the 1967 war against its Soviet-backed Arab enemies, and the resulting surge in official and popular anti-Semitism—a hatred, Sharansky notes, mingled with grudging respect—that for the first time made many Soviet Jews into proud Zionists, and gave impetus to an organized movement aiming at once to spread Jewish education in the Soviet Union and to make possible Jewish emigration to Israel. This movement, of which Sharansky later became a leader, fed upon whatever meager materials could be gleaned or manufactured in a regime hostile to Jewish existence in particular and to all those spiritual resources in general which provide men with some inner autonomy. Cut off from jobs and from official life, shunned by former associates and friends, Jewish refuseniks across the Soviet empire, from Daghestan to Estonia, cast out Communism from their lives and, while waiting for exit visas to a homeland they had never seen, held illegal Passover seders and Purim parties, taught themselves Hebrew from tattered czarist-era primers, and painstakingly reassembled the fragments of a broken, forbidden, and dispersed culture.

As Sharansky relates, for him as for many Soviet Jews the first epiphany came from reading Leon Uris's *Exodus*; his first real hero was Yonatan Netanyahu, the slain commander of the Entebbe rescue; and his first contact with free Jewry came at a KGB-infested Moscow stadium in 1973 when he watched an Israeli college basketball team trounce Puerto Rico at the World University Games and together with his friends serenaded the Israelis with Hebrew songs "and because we didn't know many Hebrew songs we sang the same ones again and again." In other words, as *Fear No Evil* makes clear, Zionism was the primary faith; it was through love of Israel that Sharansky was drawn, slowly and eventually, to love of Israel's God (and to his own, rather individual, brand of worship). This yearning for Zion also found a fleshly complement in his passion for Natalya Stieglitz—Sharansky's Avital—a shy yet adamantine-willed beauty who left for Israel the day after their wedding in 1974 and for whose love, in Sharansky's conceit, like Jacob for Rachel, he labored twelve years. In the letters and prayers reproduced in this memoir, "Avital" and "Israel" seem to be fused into a single, infinitely longed-for sanctuary and destination.

In 1973, Sharansky applied for an exit visa and was refused. Thus began what he describes as his transformation from "slave" to "free man." In the following years, by virtue of a sunny and gregarious disposition, boundless persistence, a quick provocative wit, and fluent English, he rose to prominence as chief spokesman of Soviet Jewry to the West, tirelessly mounting demonstrations and raising petitions to demand free emigration and the release of prisoners of Zion, and daily providing Western correspondents with lists of refuseniks, stories of arrests and reprisals, of prisoners in ill-health or on hunger strike. Within the Soviet Jewry movement, Sharansky deliberately confined his efforts to the goal of emigration, regarding even Jewish education solely as a means toward preparing more useful and knowledgeable Israeli citizens, not as a way of rendering Jewish life tolerable inside the Soviet Union. But he also lent his energies to the struggle for human and democratic rights generally in the USSR, helping to form the Helsinki Watch Group which documented Soviet psychiatric abuses and drew attention to the persecution of religious and ethnic minorities—Baptists, Pentacostalists, Catholics, Ukrainians, Germans, Crimean Tatars, Armenians—whose rights had been assured by the 1975 Helsinki accords.

In turn, the Western press served

FERNANDA EBERSTADT *is the author of a novel,* Low Tide. *Her articles in* COMMENTARY *include "Responding to the Bible" (January 1988), "Houses of the Dead" (February 1987), and "Out of the Drawer and Into the West" (July 1985).*

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as Sharansky's protection against the state. For, as he urgently emphasizes in *Fear No Evil*, publicity (or, to borrow the dissident movement's now coopted coinage, *glasnost*) is the free man's sole security in a regime that oppresses its citizens in inverse proportion to the amount of Western outcry. If Americans do not know a prisoner's name, Sharansky suggests, he will die in his cell. Thus, Andrei Sakharov today has been returned from exile while those less celebrated men and women jailed for demanding his release still remain in prison.

Throughout the 70's, Sharansky was batted from detention center to interrogation room, and lived glued to a suite of KGB "tails" who slept on his doorstep and shared his taxis and subway rides. This harrowed and febrile state of limbo ended in 1977, when *Izvestia* published a confession by a colleague "unmasking" Sharansky as a paid agent of the CIA. Ten days later he was arrested under the onerous Article 64, accusing him of treason against the state.

Fear No Evil, which opens with Sharansky's arrest and devotes much space to his trial, consists principally of a meticulous yet gaily humorous chronicle of his nine years behind bars. Accounts of hundred-day-long hunger strikes, interrogations, and bouts in the isolation cell are interspersed with piquant portraits of KGB chiefs, prison guards, and common criminals, as well as of the "politicals"—the fallen ministers and Ukrainian nationalists, swindlers, Christian ascetics, and Communist true believers—who were locked up with Sharansky, like scorpions in a bottle, precisely on the grounds of their supposedly violent incompatibility.

Many of the details and experiences of *Fear No Evil* will be familiar to a reader acquainted with memoirs of the gulag. Not only is life in a Communist prison much the same the world over, but many of the Soviet Union's finest and most independent thinkers—Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Vladimir Bukovsky, the late Andrei Amalrik, Edward Kuznetsov, to name just a few—have already recorded the material, sociological, and existential aspects of some of the same prisons and labor camps through which Sharansky passed, places in which the monotony of sensory deprivation is sometimes countered by a mystically heightened abundance within. In this respect Sharansky's prison memoirs partake of a certain universality. Moreover, *Fear No Evil*, though a smooth, fluent, and chatty book, is remarkable neither for literary artistry nor for intellectual complexity. What renders it such a powerful, strange, invigorating, even joyous document is another quality, or rather set of qualities, altogether.

Chief among these is the astonishing character of its author. Baldheaded, pint-sized, with plump cherry-red lips and a bright darting gaze, this monument of antic stubbornness was first introduced to the West at the time of his release, lying down in the snow and refusing to budge until his Book of Psalms was returned to him, and later veering in crazy zig-zags across the East German tarmac because his KGB escort had told him to walk straight. In *Fear No Evil* Sharansky emerges as a dynamo, driven by the determination never to be acted upon but always to be on the attack.

His mode of attack, curiously enough, consists of a truly discomfiting combination of good humor, optimism, and a sassy, wisecracking, self-mocking wit. So formidable is Sharansky's habit of finding satisfaction, interest, or comic relief in the bare walls of his cell, or in the idiocy of his captors, so often in the course of his memoir does he exclaim "What a delight" and "How wonderful," that one begins finally to appreciate how a mischievous and canny cheerfulness can be forged into armor steel-clad enough to carry its wearer unscathed through hell's fires. Two examples: once, before his conviction, Sharansky refuses to leave an overnight lockup until—several hours later—he has finished the book he is reading; later, he positively rejoices to find that his solitary punishment cell makes a perfect echo-chamber in which, day and night, he can sing at the top of his lungs, with only the prison guards to suffer the effects of his complete tone-deafness. It is perfectly symptomatic of this outlook that Sharansky's prison codename for a hunger strike was "celebrating to the limit."

Joined to Sharansky's obduracy and wit are a still rarer openness, a wide and affectionate tolerance, too bursting with curiosity to allow itself to be cut off from any kind of human encounter. This openness endows *Fear No Evil* with a sweet, aerated quality quite different from what one is accustomed to in the works of men whose righteousness takes a more solitary or austere direction. Within the book itself we see these two varieties of temperament—what might be dubbed the humanist and the purist—in fruitful counterpoint when Sharansky at last succeeds in smuggling a balled-up note to his fellow-prisoner, the religious Zionist Yosif Mendelevich, who promptly rebukes his correspondent in a rich biblical Hebrew for having written a letter on the Sabbath. For his part, far from being offended, Sharansky exults in Mendelevich's remonstrance for proving to him "that I had once more rejoined *our* life, and was dealing with *our* problems."

THE ground of Sharansky's openness and generosity is the almost mystical sense he possesses of the brotherhood of free men. Thronging his solitary cell are such fictional and historical figures as Ulysses, Hamlet, Socrates, and Gargantua, each of whom inspires in him that virtue described unforgettably by Yeats as "gaiety transfiguring all that dread." The palpably felt presence of these heroes fortifies Sharansky in his struggle by reminding him that acts of courage and truth are both infectious and interdependent. Indeed, in "a curious reverse connection," Sharansky comes to feel that just as he is spurred on by figures of legend and history, "so I, too, with my decisions and choices had the power to inspire or disenchant those who would come in the future."

In a beautiful chapter with the title, "The Interconnection of Human Souls," he justifies his difficult decision to reject the KGB's offer of an early release (on grounds

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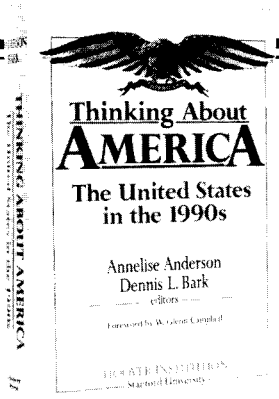
of ill-health) by bringing up the example of Galileo, "for me, . . . one of the few true giants in history, a scientific pioneer who, among other achievements, discovered the principle of inertia. And yet," he continues, Galileo's

> very fame undoubtedly multiplied the number of individuals in various times and places who cited his great name in order to justify their own moral failure, caused by an inertia of fear, and who argued that what they told the authorities was less important than the fact that "it moves." . . . If I accepted the KGB's proposal, in addition to betraying myself I would be adding to the evil in the world. For perhaps at some future date my own decision would be a harmful influence on some other prisoner.

Yet if, from Ulysses, Sharansky learns "enormous curiosity—even on the edge of the abyss," and from Gargantua laughter that breaks "through all borders of this world," the true animating source of his character and strength lies elsewhere, in a Jewish faith at once exalted and utterly visceral. Convinced of the living unity of all Jewish experience, Sharansky sees himself as an actor in Jewish history, reengaged in certain central and eternally recurring events. For him, this vocation is rendered not just plausible but obligatory by the injunction of the Passover Haggadah that each man today consider himself among those brought forth from Egypt's iron furnace by the strong hand of the Lord. It is in this more familial sense of connectedness, of shared experience and destiny, that *Fear No Evil*—in contrast, for example, to the isolate harshness of Vladimir Bukovsky's brilliant memoir, *To Build A Castle*—achieves its deep-rooted confidence and its flavor, even, of confidentiality, like a letter from a brother or son full of the most precious family memories.

THE title *Fear No Evil* is drawn from Psalm 23: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." It was, indeed, Avital's Hebrew copy of the Psalms—those ululating lamentations and jubilant songs of victory composed by another high-spirited and sassy show-off—that Sharansky read over and over again in prison and that led him gradually to a faith much like King David's: natural, mobile, and diffuse as the air we breathe, and joined at the last with an attitude he confesses to having once upon a time found mysterious and disagreeable, the fear of God.

Today, of course, thanks to Avital and her worldwide effort, which included in its ranks popes and presidents as well as students and housewives, Sharansky is a free man. In the Gulliver-back-in-England portion of *Fear No Evil*, he hilariously recounts the woes of freedom, wherein, after fifteen years as innocent of the value of privacy as an infant or a goldfish, our hero, desperate to be alone with his wife, instead finds himself be-



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sieged by friends and well-wishers harder to refuse than the KGB, and distracted by the bewildering plethora of mundane choices a free man must daily make.

What Sharansky will do with his new "myriad of choices" remains to be seen. But for the meantime, Ulysses and King David can welcome to their ranks this ebullient and doughty newcomer, who in his person and with this book has injected a little more freedom and light into the world, and by his quick and steadfast delight in them has reminded his still beleaguered people, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy dwelling places, O Israel."

Explaining the Universe

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME: FROM THE BIG BANG TO BLACK HOLES. By STEPHEN W. HAWKING. *Bantam Books. 198 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by JEFFREY MARSH

THE title of Stephen Hawking's new book is unduly modest. *A Brief History of Time* is indeed brief, but it is considerably more than a history and it deals with a far wider range of topics than time. What Hawking has written is a concise, firsthand account of current scientific thinking regarding the nature of the universe as a whole, enlivened by his own insights into recent developments in the theories of general relativity and quantum mechanics.

Hawking himself is responsible for many of those developments. One of the world's premier mathematical physicists, he holds the Lucasian Chair of Mathematics at Cambridge University, a position once occupied by Sir Isaac Newton. Here he shows not only a formidable command of the technicalities of the subject matter, but an ability to communicate that is notable for its nontechnical clarity and accessibility to the lay reader.

This combination of scientific creativity and literary ability, while by no means common, is not unique. What definitely is unique is the incredible degree of struggle that has characterized Hawking's career. A glance at the book's cover photo gives a hint of the effort that has been entailed not only in his achieving professional eminence but even in his being able to marry and raise a family. In the photograph, Hawking is shown against the background of a star-filled sky. The wheelchair in which he is seated, his wasted frame, his hunched posture all testify to the effects of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, the progressively crippling Lou Gehrig's disease from which the forty-six-year-old scientist has suffered for a quarter of a century. Just the production of this book entailed a staggering effort, for ever since a 1985 bout with pneumonia destroyed his already limited ability to speak, Hawking has been able to communicate with the outside world only by means of a computer.

It is not surprising, then, that much of the attention that has deservedly been paid to *A Brief History of Time*, Hawking's most popular work and an atypical best-seller, has focused on the author and his handicap. Nor is this necessarily inappropriate. Even though scientists have traditionally insisted on the subordination of personality to the objective communication of results, Hawking refers frequently in this book to his handicap, often in joking asides; moreover, knowledge of his condition helps us appreciate the personality that lies behind some of the most significant, and surprising, advances in physics in recent years.

Hawking's central theme is that the dogged pursuit of consistency, both between theory and observation and among different parts of the same theory, will eventually lead to a full understanding of the universe. Indeed, his scientific contributions as a whole have been characterized by an extraordinary intellectual determination to follow ideas to their logical conclusion, no matter how absurd that conclusion may at first appear.

Hawking is keenly aware that even the giants Newton and Einstein failed to pursue some far-reaching implications of their own insights. Newton did not realize that according to his theory of gravitation, a universe that was both infinite and unchanging could not exist: the force of gravity would inevitably cause it to collapse on itself. In fact, it took some 300 years before this was appreciated. And when at last Albert Einstein superseded Newton's theory with his General Theory of Relativity, according to which the universe would tend either to expand or contract spontaneously, he too assumed that the equations showing this result would have to be modified to allow for a static solution. (Einstein later declared this the worst mistake he ever made.)

According to Hawking, it was Edwin Hubble's 1929 discovery that the universe was expanding which, by destroying Newton's long-held assumption, began the modern study of cosmology and eventually led to general agreement that the universe came into existence at a definite time in the past. In simple terms, the beginnings of the current expansion can be traced back to a cataclysmic explosion, popularly known as the big bang. This was the moment of creation, the origin of the universe and of space and time. Depending on how much matter there may be in the universe (an issue of considerable dispute), the resulting expansion may either continue until eternity or reverse itself some time in the future, shrinking the universe until it once again approaches a state of infinite density—the "big crunch"—and the end of time as we know it.

UNTIL the mid-1960's, the study of the origin of the universe remained something of a backwater within the field of astrophysics. An inconclusive debate pitted followers of the big-bang theory against others who believed on philosophical grounds that the expanding universe was kept in a steady state of constant average density by the continuous creation of matter at a slow rate. The latter theory was largely abandoned after 1965, about the same time Hawking was starting his career as a graduate student. As he describes it, having already survived longer than the two years' life expectancy he had been granted when his physical condition was

JEFFREY MARSH *has written on science for* COMMENTARY *and other periodicals.*

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first diagnosed, he had decided to marry and needed a Ph.D. to get a job. He came across an interesting thesis topic dealing with black holes, then a considerably more arcane topic than it was subsequently to become (thanks in no small part to Hawking himself).

Hawking's adviser, Roger Penrose, had shown that the collapse of a sufficiently massive star, the atomic structure of which was not strong enough to resist its own gravitational attraction, would result in a black hole. This, as devotees of popular science-fiction know, is a gravitational singularity occupying zero volume which is able to absorb anything closely approaching it but from which neither matter nor light can escape. Hawking soon realized that the logic of Penrose's argument could be reversed. In the first of his notable contributions, he proved that if the universe were indeed expanding, it must have *originated* in a gravitational singularity: the big bang.

Meanwhile, researchers in other branches of physics were also looking more closely into the early behavior of the universe. According to theories emerging in the 1960's and 70's, the subatomic particles—protons and neutrons—known since the early days of nuclear physics, were in fact made up of still more fundamental entities—quarks—which had the disconcerting property of being undetectable in isolation. To prove these new theories, it would be necessary to observe what happened to such subnuclear particles at extremely high energies, when (it was predicted) the considerable differences observed in their behaviors under normal conditions would disappear. Unfortunately, as Hawking remarks in one of his driest asides, an accelerator powerful enough to test the new theories "would have to be as big as the solar system—and would be unlikely to be funded in the present economic climate."

But there could be a substitute for such an experimental test: one could predict the composition of today's universe by making calculations on the basis of what should have happened immediately after the big bang, when both the density and temperature of the universe were sufficiently high. Considerations along these lines led to an ever growing acceptance both of the big-bang theory itself and of the unified theories of elementary particle physics.

IN THE 1970's, Hawking, who sometimes seems to be the Indiana Jones of mathematical physics, moved on to even less charted territory, the no-man's land between the theory of relativity, which deals with the universe on the largest scale, and the theory of quantum mechanics, which deals with the most microscopic aspect of reality. A reconciliation of these two theories, which in their present forms are inconsistent, is a prerequisite for a uniform theory covering all the laws of nature, the ultimate goal of physics.

There is a fundamental point of difference between classical physics, with its assumption of a strictly deterministic relationship between present and future, and quantum mechanics, where even in principle our knowledge can be no better than statistical. That point of difference is closely related to the Uncertainty Principle enunciated by the 20th-century German physicist Werner Heisenberg. To invoke the most familiar illustration of that principle, we cannot exactly specify both the position and the momentum of a particle: in other words, the more certain we are of the location of an object at one instant, the less we know about where it will be the next. Another less well known but equally surprising consequence of the Uncertainty Principle is that even a perfect vacuum is full of rapidly fluctuating electric and magnetic fields.

In the course of a dispute over thermodynamics, Hawking took note of this second consequence, and he was led by it to the totally unexpected, indeed shocking, conclusion that black holes, which supposedly can only absorb matter and energy from the outside world,

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actually spontaneously emit particles, with the greatest rate of emission coming from the least massive black holes. In terms as clear and simple as possible, and with the frequent use of witty and enlightening analogies, he explains in the book the reasoning that led him to this and other discoveries—discoveries that propel him to believe that "we may now be near the end of the end of the search for the ultimate laws of nature." Should we achieve this goal, he writes, the next step will be "the discussion of why it is that we and the universe exist. If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason—for then we would know the mind of God."

WHAT does Hawking mean by knowing "the mind of God"? Earlier, he has given us a clue to his own mind on this question when he cites the concept of imaginary time, a mathematical construct (obtained by multiplying time by the square root of minus one) frequently used by physicists. In the world of real time, experienced by real people, the universe, Hawking writes, "has a beginning . . . at which the laws of physics break down. . . ." But, he goes on, "maybe what we call real is just an idea that we invent." In such a case, the universe, though finite, "would be completely self-contained and not affected by anything outside itself. It would be neither created nor destroyed. It would just BE. . . . What place, then, for a creator?"

But if "what we call real is just an idea that we invent," what Hawking has given us here is not so much an insight into the "mind of God" as an explanation of why we cannot expect to have such an insight. His explanation is akin to a more familiar one given often by philosophers, though in his case it comes couched in the language of physics. Some may find it no more satisfactory for that.

"In all your ways, know Him," the Book of Proverbs tells us. Those ways extend beyond the intellectual. In particular, the "mind of God" may be thought to contain answers to two overwhelming questions touching upon the nature and purpose of the universe.

The first is implicit in a paradox expressed most pithily by Rabbi Akiva: "All is foreseen, but free will is granted." The reason that no merely human mind can fathom the answer to this paradox has to do with our necessarily imperfect knowledge of time. The second and more agonizing question is that of Job, and it concerns the justification of evil and suffering. To that question, our answer must lie in acceptance, which is not the same thing as resignation—and also in wonder at the example set for us by, among other marvels of the universe, the suffering and triumph of such as Stephen Hawking.

The Violent Pacifists

PEACE AND REVOLUTION: THE MORAL CRISIS OF AMERICAN PACIFISM. By GUENTER LEWY. *Eerdmans. 282 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by RAEL JEAN ISAAC

A BETTER subtitle for this valuable book would be "The Moral *Collapse* of American Pacifism." The moral crisis is long past. In painstaking detail, Guenter Lewy describes how that crisis came to a head during the Vietnam war, ending in a total breakdown of pacifist principle within the four major pacifist organizations: the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), the War Resisters League (WRL), and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). All four now work cozily with Communist fronts and form part and parcel of the various radical "peace-and-justice" coalitions that advocate disarmament at home and the triumph of Third World Marxist-Leninist insurgencies abroad.

The four major organizations were born during or immediately after World War I, and from the beginning there were ideological stresses within them. Lewy shows, indeed, that the arguments that would undermine pacifism in the 1960's were raised as early as the 1920's, when the new organizations faced their first crisis, the temptation of Marxism.

Thus, in a landmark 1928 essay entitled "Pacifism and Class War," A.J. Muste, for many years the most prominent American pacifist, expanded the definition of the sorts of violence which pacifists should oppose; they now included "the economic, social, political order in which we live." At the same time, Muste excused the violence perpetrated by those fighting against the American "order," by initiating what was later to become a favorite device of pacifist authors: a "calculus" of violence. Ninety percent of the violence in the world, he wrote, was perpetrated by the forces of the status quo; it was therefore "ludicrous" for people to focus on the 10 percent actively committed by those rebelling against a repressive system. Similarly, in 1933 Devere Allen argued that "all the violence that Communism in this country advocates and desires is as a drop in the creek as compared with the violence which we live under in the present economic system."

As Lewy shows, the pacifist organizations weathered this first crisis, aided by the strong consensus of the membership that violence of any kind must never be condoned. A 1933 poll of the membership of the Fellowship of Reconciliation produced a lopsided majority of 877 to 93 opposing class violence as well as international violence. Those insistent upon Marxist doctrine—in the case of the FOR they at one point included the organization's executive secretary, J.B. Matthews—were forced to resign.

In fact, up to the early 1960's the pacifist organizations remained clear-headed in recognizing that Communists were not proper allies. Each of the organizations issued statements like the FOR's 1940 declaration that

> the Communist party rejects pacifism in principle. . . . For the FOR to be associated with the CP in "antiwar activities" could therefore only confuse multitudes of people as to our aim and function and thus stultify our efforts.

RAEL JEAN ISAAC *is the co-author (with Erich Isaac) of* The Coercive Utopians, *and is currently at work with Virginia Armat on a book about the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill.*

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But all this was to crumble in the face of the second moral crisis of the pacifists, the Vietnam war.

In the course of that war, or rather in the course of American involvement in it, the organizations, open partisans of a North Vietnamese victory, abandoned their opposition to participating in united fronts with Communists. The arguments rejected in the 1930's now became cornerstones of pacifist thought. In 1970, the national council of the FOR, invoking the increasingly familiar "calculus" of violence, adopted a statement exonerating the behavior of the radical New Left fringe: "Santa Barbara students who burned a branch of the Bank of America . . . committed a very mild act of violence in comparison with, for example, the dropping of 12,000 tons of bombs on South Vietnam by the American high command." Similarly, WILPF president Kay Camp insisted that the impetuous acts of America's youth could not be equated "with the institutionalized violence of our government."

Like the distinction pointed to earlier by A.J. Muste, a distinction came to be drawn at this time between the violence of the oppressor and the violence of the oppressed, which had to be "understood" and judged in different terms. According to a 1968 statement by the War Resisters International (the parent body of the American WRL), the violence of Americans was "criminal" while that of the oppressed, at home and abroad, was "tragic." WRL's Dave Dellinger declared that he did not repudiate or oppose "the violence of the victims."

Within each of the organizations, as Lewy documents, there were warnings that pacifism was being undermined by these stands, but the warnings were ignored. Albert Hassler, the long-time executive secretary of the FOR, wrote in 1968 that terms like "the violence of the status quo" were having a subversive effect, and that pacifists were becoming believers, if not in "just war," then in "just revolutions." Jim Forest, also of the FOR, wondered about "the collapse of our faith in the pacifist insight: that the means control the quality of the end." But the opponents of the new trend were fatally hobbled because they agreed with the majority about the war in Vietnam, where (in Hassler's words) the United States was doing "obscenely indecent things." This made them hesitant about pressing their case, either inside or outside the organizations. Once they saw that their views were repudiated by the majority, they remained quiet or, at best, bowed out.

SINCE the end of the war, the pacifist organizations have gone on to become mere apologists for a series of "progressive" regimes and terrorist bands. Lewy details the depths to which they sank in the immediate post-Vietnam era. As reports of oppression in "liberated" Vietnam reached the West and the seas became filled with boat people, the pacifist organizations simply denied that any human-rights violations were taking place at all. When a number of former antiwar activists, led by Joan Baez, published an open letter to the government of Vietnam protesting its treatment of dissidents, leaders of the WILPF (including its president and vice president) signed a counter-statement in the New York *Times* declaring that Vietnam "now enjoys human rights as it has never known in history."

Even the massacres taking place in Cambodia under Pol Pot failed to stir a response. According to John McAuliff, head of the AFSC's Indochina program, accusations against the Cambodian regime were part of an American "misinformation" campaign aimed at discrediting "the example of an alternative model of development and social organization." Not until Vietnam invaded and seized Cambodia, and publicized the atrocities of the Pol Pot regime, did the AFSC admit to the horrors that had occurred, and even then it put the primary blame for the fate of Cambodia on the United States.

The policy of working in coalition with groups professedly ded-

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icated to "peace and justice" has led to the preposterous spectacle of WRL participation in a 1984 Libyan-influenced "peace" conference in Malta. Many delegates came with Libyan financing, and Qaddafi's *Green Book* was distributed to participants. In his report on the conference, David McReynolds of the WRL argued: "Rather than being frightened by the Libyans, . . . should we not welcome the fact that revolutionary movements, including the Libyans, are interested in dialogue with nonviolence movements?" A similar disposition has informed the multifaceted activities of the various pacifist organizations in Central America, where again they have made common cause with radical forces openly espousing and engaging in violence.

In short, most leaders of pacifist organizations today seem to share the sentiments expressed by a leader of the WRL: "There is one crime worse than murder: to retire from the revolution."

IN *Peace and Revolution* Guenter Lewy has written a scholarly rather than a polemical book, and throughout he is determined to let the facts tell their own story. It is thus to be regretted that instead of telling that story, which is an inherently fascinating one, he proceeds instead by dealing with each of the organizations separately, chronicling its rhetoric and activities on a variety of issues, zigzagging back and forth in time. Since the differences in perspective and behavior among the organizations are quite minor, this makes for an unduly cumbersome and repetitive structure. Moreover, important topics tend to get lost or diffused. There are, for example, two chapters nominally devoted to dissent within the pacifist organizations, yet in neither one of them is the topic discussed with thoroughness; most of the coverage of dissent occurs disjointedly throughout the book in connection with stands taken by each of the organizations on specific issues.

The weakness of Lewy's approach is evident as well when he comes in the last chapter to examine the moral dilemmas of pacifist witness in a democratic order. Here he argues that pacifists have a legitimate role to play as bearers of the humanitarian conscience, reminding the rest of us of the link between means and ends. As Lewy writes: "The pacifist vision of a world free of the threat of war can help build support for the development of an ordered political community at the international level able to resolve conflicts peacefully and justly." But—he goes on—when pacifists enter the political arena to propose policies for their nation, they become subject to what Weber called the "ethic of responsibility," which involves taking into account the realities of power and the likely consequence of political decisions: the policies they advocate must be judged by their results. Finally, while pacifists may, for themselves, "seek individual salvation through ethical absolutism and purity," they have no right to sacrifice others to this vocation.

THERE can be no quarrel with any of this. But on the basis of his own evidence, Lewy could have gone much further in exploring the corrupting consequences that ensue when pacifists destroy the traditional meaning of violence in order to endorse the violence of those they favor. The reasoning goes like this: if, as David McReynolds maintains, the violence of unemployment is as real "as napalm falling on Vietnam," then it is no more reprehensible to work to bring down a government adjudged guilty of causing unemployment than to permit it to continue in existence; indeed, it may be less so, because a "small" amount of "just" violence can lead to the overall lessening of violence in the world. In this way do self-styled pacifists move from abhorring to advocating violence.

Increasingly, indeed, violence has become the *touchstone* by which pacifists identify those worthy of their support. The more violent a group, the more just its cause must be—always provided, of course, that the cause is "progressive." Thus, all four pacifist organizations identify with the PLO, a movement whose declared goal is the destruction of a national state and the removal of most of its present inhabitants.

The logic of their position forces the pacifist organizations to encourage and support ever higher levels of violence, for if peace depends on the elimination of the injustices they have identified, the more violence is directed toward this end, the closer we will come to peace. Meanwhile, of course, the pacifists themselves sit on the sidelines, applauding. "I advocate nonviolence. I practice nonviolence," says Dave Dellinger; but, he goes on, the traditional nonviolent movement "has been much too passive and much too ineffective and I am not interested in the purity of the movement. I am interested in social effectiveness." Given the new ground rules, pacifists can simultaneously pursue revolution and underground warfare while retaining their pacifist virtue—the ultimate moral luxury.

That despite their evolution the major pacifist organizations have continued to enjoy credibility with so many people—the AFSC raises millions of dollars annually on the strength of its humanitarian image—is one of the scandals of American political life. In helping to expose the true theory and practice of pacifist organizations today, Guenter Lewy has performed a vital public service.

Life-Lover

THE LETTERS OF EDITH WHARTON. Edited by R.W.B. LEWIS and NANCY LEWIS. *Scribners. 576 pp. $29.95.*

Reviewed by JAMES W. TUTTLETON

WHEN one reflects on the popularity of Edith Wharton's work in her lifetime, the vast body of serious literary criticism her work generated and still generates, and her enduring and fully justified reputation as a major American novelist—moreover, our best woman novelist—the fact that her

JAMES W. TUTTLETON *is professor of English at NYU. His review of Arthur Miller's* Timebends *appeared in our March issue.*

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correspondence has been so long delayed in publication is something of a mystery.

When she died in 1937, Mrs. Wharton's letters, according to the terms of her will, were closed to inspection for thirty years. During that period, Percy Lubbock published a rather acerbic biography, emphasizing the imperiousness of her personality. Lubbock's book was strangely off-key, but, in the absence of her correspondence, no confirming impression of the woman and writer was otherwise available.

Once the correspondence was released for scholarly inspection, R.W.B. Lewis expertly mined it for his Pulitzer Prize-winning biography, *Edith Wharton: A Life* (1975). But it has taken another thirteen years for an edition of the letters to appear. Whatever the reason for the delay, the wait has been worth it. In this selection, ably edited and annotated by R.W.B. Lewis and Nancy Lewis, we have nearly 400 of the extant 4,000 letters Mrs. Wharton wrote to friends and correspondents. And what an honor roll it makes: Henry James, Bernard Berenson, André Gide, Paul Bourget, Charles Eliot Norton, John Jay Chapman, Kenneth Clark, Royall Tyler, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Aldous Huxley, Sinclair Lewis, and others. At last the image of the woman and writer has begun to come into clearer focus. What do these letters disclose?

First, the older view that Edith Wharton was a starched grande dame, imprisoned by the social proprieties of Old New York, where she was born in 1862, must now be fully discarded. The letters reveal a woman of exceptional energy, great passion, and extraordinary intensity. If she was sometimes formal with strangers, to intimate friends she could be tender and affectionate, a treasury of wit and learning, sympathy and compassion. And they reciprocated with care and concern, especially after the turn of the century, when she was obliged to divorce Edward Wharton, the ineffectual husband whose embezzlement of her estate to finance his infidelities made living together impossible.

Second, the letters disclose how strangely intermixed was the ironic rationalism of her temper (she once called herself the "high priestess of reason") with her capacity for ecstasy in love, once she experienced it at the late age of forty-six. One of the revelations of this new edition comes from the selection from her 300 or so letters to Morton Fullerton, with whom she had a passionate affair beginning in 1908. These previously unknown letters surfaced in 1980, long after Lewis's biography had been published. But they confirm his astute inference there that the unstable and philandering Fullerton was the first and only grand love of her life. Although it was a short-lived affair, it aroused in Edith Wharton an ethereal rapture almost transcendental in its mysticism.

An instance of the rich mixture in her of reason and passion is suggested by a 1908 letter to Fullerton, after his inexplicable neglect made plain to her that his ardor had cooled. "The basest thing about the state of 'caring,' " she wrote, "is the tendency to bargain and calculate, as if it were a game of skill played between antagonistics." And she went on to remark: "There would have been the making of an accomplished flirt in me, because my lucidity shows me each move of the game—but that, in the same instant, a reaction of contempt makes me sweep all the counters off the board & cry out: —'Take them all—I don't want to win—I want to lose everything to you!' " But then again, pulling up short: "I pause, remembering you once told me that, on this topic, I serve up the stalest of platitudes with an air of triumphant discovery!"

By 1910 the affair was virtually finished. "I said once that my life was better before I knew you," she wrote Fullerton. "That is not so, for it is good to have lived once *in the round*, for ever so short a time." Indeed, that experience made much richer her treatment of ardent love in her later fiction, especially *Ethan Frome* (1911), *The Reef* (1912), *Summer* (1917), and the Pulitzer Prize winner, *The Age of Innocence* (1920).

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THE Wharton letters also throw a clearer light on a third aspect of her life and work—her attitude toward America and her reasons for moving permanently to Paris in 1907. After spending a night in an expensive American "summer hotel" in 1904, she wrote Sara Norton that she despaired of the Republic: "Such dreariness, such whining sallow women, such utter absence of the amenities, such crass food, crass manners, crass landscape!! And mind you, it is a new & fashionable hotel. What a horror it is for a whole nation to be developing without the sense of beauty"—and, she added comically, "eating bananas for breakfast." Apropos of the extravagant plutocracy in New York, she wrote in 1905 to Morgan Dix, the rector of Trinity Church: "Social conditions as they are just now in our new world, where the sudden possession of money has come without inherited obligations, or any traditional sense of solidarity between the classes, is a vast & absorbing field for the novelist, & I wish a great master could arise to deal with it."

She herself was to be the great master of this subject in her best-selling novel, *The House of Mirth* (1905). A persistent critic of the coarseness and inelegance of American manners, she scoffed at the critic Van Wyck Brooks for assuming, in *The Pilgrimage of Henry James* (1925), that "human relations in America are intrinsically as interesting as in the old centers of civilization and social life." And she exclaimed to Barrett Wendell, "How much longer are we going to think it necessary to be 'American' before (or in contradistinction to) being cultivated, being enlightened, being humane, & having the same intellectual discipline as other civilized countries? It is really too easy a disguise for our shortcomings to dress them up as a form of patriotism!"

Yet although she was an expatriate, Mrs. Wharton's quintessential Americanism expressed itself in the tenacity with which she clung to her right to define our social and intellectual shortcomings. To her, Henry James, whose friendship, she once wrote, "has been the pride & honor of my life," seemed ready to give up on the country; she, however, was not. To John Hugh Smith she remarked in 1911: "America can't be quite so summarily treated & so lightly dismissed as our great Henry thinks; but at the present stage of its strange unfolding it isn't exactly a propitious 'ambiance' for the arts, & I can understand his feeling as he does. Balzac would not have!" In *The Custom of the Country* (1913), she produced a Franco-American novel of manners both Balzacian in scope and withering in its critique of American mammonism.

ONE of the pleasures of *The Letters of Edith Wharton* is to see a fourth area of her work more clearly defined—the formation of her literary principles and her judgment of the work of other writers of fiction. As a novelist of manners, she early on committed herself to the method of reportorial realism. "There is, of course, no recipe for writing a good novel, & each 'method' is worth just what the writer can make out of it," she told Judge Robert Grant, author of *Unleavened Bread* (1900); "but I am so great a believer in the objective attitude that I have specially enjoyed the successful use you have made of it; your consistent abstinence from comment, explanation & partisanship, & your confidence in the reader's ability to draw his own conclusions."

So great was this faith in the "objective attitude," the method she associated with the great 19th-century masters like Trollope, Tolstoy, and Balzac, that she could not stand the mandarin psychological style employed by her friend Henry James. To her editor William Crary Brownell, she complained in 1904 that "the continued cry that I am an echo of Mr. James (whose books of the last ten years I can't read, much as I delight in the man), & the assumption that the people I write about are not 'real' because they are not navvies and charwomen, makes me feel rather hopeless. I write about what I see, what I happen to be nearest to, which is surely better than doing cowboys de chic." And of James's *The Sacred Fount* she wrote to Sara Norton: "I could cry over the ruins of such a talent," a judgment with which many readers have agreed.

Her opinion of other writers is delivered with a comparable sharpness of insight. Of André Gide she observed: "He is a mass of quivering 'susceptibilities,' & invents grievances when he can't find them ready made. Luckily he is so charming that one ends by not minding." She insisted to John Hugh Smith and Percy Lubbock

"IF POLLUTANTS are keeping too much of the planet's heat in, and if one of the prime sources of pollutants is the burning of fossil fuels (coal and oil), then why not switch to another fuel, which doesn't smoke, doesn't rain acidly, doesn't need a task force in the Persian Gulf to walk it home. That is n------ power. Shhhh."

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that "We love [George Bernard] Shaw because he's knocked over a few tottering conventions; but his satires won't outlast the special weaknesses he satirizes, because they're too specialized and don't deal with the general human fate." She dismissed Proust's *Sodom et Gomorrhe* (1921), the fourth part of *Remembrance of Things Past*: "I think he has *fourvoyé* himself [gone astray] in a subject that can't lead anywhere in art, & belongs only to pathology. What a pity he didn't devote himself to the abnormalities of the normal, which offer a wide enough and untilled enough field, heaven knows."

Committed as she was to the representation of her characters' *conscious* motivation, she insisted on the artful design of formal narrative structures. Modernist methods like Joyce's stream-of-consciousness technique in *Ulysses* made her livid. In 1923 she told Bernard Berenson that *Ulysses* was "a turgid welter of pornography (the rudest schoolboy kind) & unformed and unimportant drivel; & until the raw ingredients of a pudding *make* a pudding, I shall never believe that the raw material of sensation & thought can make a work of art without the cook's intervening. The same applies to [T.S.] Eliot." She added: "I *know* it's not because I'm gettting old that I'm unresponsive. The trouble with all this new stuff is that's *à thèse*: the theory comes first & dominates it." Such observations, recorded in the letters, prepared the way for her formal exposition of the novelist's art in *The Writing of Fiction* (1925).

ONE of the most sharply worded expressions of her literary perspective was addressed to the socialist Upton Sinclair, who had sent her his propagandistic novel *Oil* in 1927: "It seems to me an excellent story until the moment, all too soon, when it becomes a political pamphlet. I make this criticism without regard to the views which you teach, and which are detestable to me. Had you written in favor of those in which I believe, my judgment would have been exactly the same." She added that she had "never known a novel that was good enough to be good in spite of its being adapted to the author's political views."

This same letter, incidentally, gives us a glimpse into Mrs. Wharton's own political views. While she could understand, she wrote Sinclair, how the excesses of the millionaire oil tycoons might be "enough to justify any thoughtful man in the desire to make some radical change in the organization of our society, I believe that a wider experience would have shown you that the evils you rightly satirize will be replaced by others more harmful to any sort of civilized living when your hero and his friends have had their way." The historical insight displayed in this remark is witheringly acute.

Shortly before her death in Paris in 1937, Edith Wharton wrote to Mary Berenson that she wished she knew "what people mean when they say they find 'emptiness' in this wonderful adventure of living, which seems to me to pile up its glories like an horizon-wide sunset as the light declines. I'm afraid I'm an incorrigible life-lover & life-wonderer & adventurer." So she was, as woman and writer, and so these letters wonderfully reveal.

The Fourth Estate

BEYOND MALICE: THE MEDIA'S YEARS OF RECKONING. By RICHARD M. CLURMAN. *Transaction Books. 306 pp. $24.95.*

THE COMING BATTLE FOR THE MEDIA. By WILLIAM A. RUSHER. *Morrow. 228 pp. $18.95*

Reviewed by DAVID BROCK

RICHARD CLURMAN and William Rusher approach their subject from divergent backgrounds. Clurman, a long-time editor and executive with Time Inc., has behind him a career inside one of the country's mainline media giants. Rusher writes from his perspective as a founder of a journal of conservative opinion—since the 1950's he has been the publisher of *National Review*—and sometime political activist.

Given this professional discrepancy, it is all the more remarkable that the two authors should share the identical point of departure. By the beginning of the present decade, according to both Clurman and Rusher, the national news media had acquired both impressive force and unprecedented influence in American political and cultural life, and had become, indeed, an "estate" on a par with the three branches of the federal government. As both authors see it, this newfound media power has not only exacerbated the age-old problems lodged in the very structure of the news-gathering process but has produced a startling array of new and more complex ones. It has also made the public increasingly skeptical of, if not downright hostile toward, the journalistic enterprise as a whole. Finally, both authors agree that grave consequences will follow if reforms of current practices and attitudes are not soon undertaken.

DESPITE the swift rise in the influence of the major media, there has been no concomitant growth in serious media analysis, empirical or otherwise. Surely the reason for this must be sought in the reluctance of the media themselves to cast light on their own inner workings. Of the few journalists assigned to report on the subject, the number with a penchant for adversarial posturing, of the kind that is so valued when it comes to reporting, say, on major American corporations, is infinitesimal. What we are left with are a smattering of social-science research, solicitous reports in small-circulation journalism reviews, and ineffectual attacks from gadflies outside the profession.

Perhaps media executives are afraid of what a real probe of their operations might dig up. One can understand why they should be, if Richard Clurman's *Beyond Malice* is any indication of the kind of forceful analysis we have been missing. In this candid, temperate, and fair-minded book, Clurman trenchantly examines the two famous libel suits of the 1980's,

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DAVID BROCK, *whose article, "What the Kiss-and-Tell Books Tell," appeared last month, writes on politics for* Insight *magazine.*

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General William Westmoreland's against the Columbia Broadcasting System and General Ariel Sharon's against *Time*. The significance of his account lies precisely in the credentials of the author, who now heads Columbia University's Seminars on Media and Society, having retired from Time Inc. in 1985 after a thirty-year career.

Much of the ground covered in *Beyond Malice* will not be new to those who followed press reports of the trials or read Renata Adler's *Reckless Disregard* and Don Kowet's *Matter of Honor*. But unlike these authors, Clurman is concerned less with the details and more with the broader issue: how the low journalistic ethics exhibited in the two cases fueled the near-crisis that today characterizes relations between the media and the public.

Since the 1961 case of *New York Times Co.* v. *Sullivan*, the law has held that a public official cannot obtain a judgment on a false and defaming press statement unless he can show that the statement was made with "actual malice"—that is, "with knowledge that it was false or with reckless disregard of whether it was false or not." Although three out of four libel suits are therefore dismissed by judges before they go to trial, once they do, juries find against the media three-quarters of the time, returning judgments of, on average, $2.2 million. (In most of these cases, judges then proceed to reverse or revise the decision, the jury having failed to understand the finer points of the law.)

General Westmoreland, a straight-arrow, self-confident military man, was bound to engender more than his fair share of suspicion and irreverence from almost any working journalist. But as Clurman shows, the chief source of his difficulties with CBS, which interviewed him for a documentary on the war in Vietnam, and which was out to prove that the general had led a "conspiracy" to "suppress and alter critical intelligence" on the size of enemy forces operating in South Vietnam, lay in the fact that the journalists in question worked in television, a medium with a much greater potential for misleading the public than the printed word. At the trial, the jurors were able to see this for themselves. The Westmoreland interview, conducted by Mike Wallace, produced almost two hours of footage; five minutes and thirty-eight seconds made it into the final, well-packaged broadcast. As Clurman writes, the jurors, in viewing the unaired out-takes of the show, could observe the "concealed, erratic, and dark" side of the production, "replete with favoritism, manipulation, entrapment, ad-hoc judgments, and censorship of views that hurt [the journalists'] thesis."

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the behavior of CBS in this instance was closer to the norm than it was an aberration. At one point during the trial, a senior news executive from another major network whispered in Clurman's ear: "I hope CBS loses. We do terrible things on the news."

A similar moral arises out of Clurman's treatment of the libel suit of Ariel Sharon against *Time,* which was prompted by that magazine's abuse of another standard practice, the use of unidentified sources. In what was (according to Clurman) a solid cover story on the September 1982 massacre by Christian Phalangist forces of Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, *Time* felt compelled to "hype" its material by claiming that General Sharon had "discussed with the Gemayels [then the ruling family in Lebanon] the need for the Phalangists to take revenge" for the killing of a family member, and had thereby encouraged them to conduct the massacre.

Clurman zeroes in on two words in the text, in which *Time* accused Sharon "reportedly" of an act it had "learned" of. In journalistic parlance, Clurman explains, "reportedly" means "either that we hear and find this credible but can't prove it or that we have been told and believe it, but can't tell you by whom." The other term, "learned," signals that the information is exclusive, serving "no other purpose than bragging or calling attention to yourself." The use of these terms is always risky; combining the two in order to make a charge spelled double trouble for *Time.*

CLURMAN believes that the public, concerned more with ends than with means, will tolerate questionable journalistic methods "only when the result is important and conclusive." Neither the CBS documentary nor the *Time* report fit those criteria. Westmoreland settled for a public apology, though Clurman suggests he likely would have won a favorable judgment since CBS never proved, either on the air or in court, the central thrust of its charge. As for Sharon, the *Time* reporter, David Halevy, could produce no factual evidence for his allegation, which was found by a federal jury to be both false and defamatory, though the jury did not believe that *Time* had published it knowing that it was untrue. The jury brought in what is now known as a "Sharon verdict," in which the defendant wins on truth but loses on law.

Both media organizations, though their integrity was severely impugned, claimed vindication. Clurman fears, indeed, that the outcome of the two cases has actually encouraged members of the press to ignore the "real overall impression their damning stories sometimes create," so long as they stay within the law. This legal standard, Clurman believes, being one that "allows inaccuracy and unfairness," is not good enough for the general public, and ought not to be good enough for journalists.

More than anything else, it is the hubris of the press that troubles Clurman. It is a hubris fed by the new authority of newspapers and magazines with national circulation, and by the power of television, and it cries out for rectification. "As the news media expand and their technology amplifies them into louder and more dominating national voices," Clurman writes, "assertions of truth need to be left more for the public to thrash out and less for the press to declare." Unfortunately, the trend in the media seems to be in the opposite direction, toward ever-more prosecutorial tactics, speculative analysis, inaccurate conclusions, and cheap sensationalism.

Clurman is surely right about all this, yet his analysis misses something so crucial as to detract from its own persuasiveness. In his discussion of the Westmoreland and Sharon cases he proceeds without treating seriously the rather obvious possibility of ideological bias. Can he really believe that such factors as hostility to the American engagement in Vietnam (on the part of the CBS team), or to the harder-line factions in Israeli politics (on the part of *Time*'s reporter) played no important role in the lapses he discusses? For an exploration of this point, we may turn to William Rusher.

IN *The Coming Battle for the Media* Rusher supplies a comprehensive account of the available literature on the subject of media bias. It ranges from studies of the content of news reports to Rorschach-like Thematic Apperception Tests on how journalists interpret the news. While some of these studies have been shown to exhibit methodological or other flaws that limit their usefulness, taken as a whole the data irrefutably establish that journalists lean much more to the Left politically than the general public, and that their views infuse and skew the journalistic product.

Rusher is at his strongest in providing original examples of bias in specific news reports. Thus, he dissects a 1985 broadcast of the NBC *Today* show purporting to demonstrate how, in the words of correspondent Mike Jensen, "the richest people" would benefit from the Reagan tax-reform plan of that year. Jensen conveyed this message by inaccurate and tendentious description of the plan, and by outright misrepresentation of its effects on tax shelters and charitable contributions. There are many more such examples in *The Coming Battle for the Media.* Rusher also describes in detail the revolving-door process by which individuals move from the offices of Capitol Hill Democrats and Democratic political campaigns to high-level media jobs, especially in television news.

Rusher marshals his evidence to form a central thesis:

> In recent decades, the principal media in the United States, responding to liberal intellectual trends once dominant but now much less so, have allied themselves with those political forces promoting liberal policies and have placed news reportage at the service of those policies.

This is a questionable judgment, on two counts. First of all, Rusher overstates the extent to which media bias is the result of calculated intention; in fact it is a more nuanced phenomenon than that, which means that its influence is much harder to combat. Secondly, Rusher curiously *under*states the content of media bias by connect-

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ing it with "liberal policies." If anything, it is the agenda not of liberalism but of the New Left, with its espousal of isolationism and appeasement in foreign affairs and its rejection of the standards and values of the middle class at home, that today forms the soft undergirding ethos of the New York-Washington prestige press, both print and electronic.

CAN the media be reformed? Both of these books perform a real service in raising and attempting to answer that question. Rusher, no libertarian, looks mainly to the federal government for possible solutions. U.S. courts, he asserts, could rewrite our libel laws to make them more like Great Britain's, so that defendants might win damage claims without proving "actual malice." Congress should revive the Fairness Doctrine for broadcast licensees and consider enacting a statutory right of reply for aggrieved individuals or organizations. The executive branch should more vigorously prosecute the divulgence of information in any way prejudicial to the safety or interests of the United States, and draw up plans for invoking, when necessary, the sort of military censorship that so enraged the press corps during the U.S. invasion of Grenada.

A solution to the problem of unbalanced reporting, Rusher writes, would be to interest those with more conservative learnings to pursue careers in journalism. This would certainly help promote a healthy debate within news organizations on the issues of the day, but it is easier said than done. Although Rusher is encouraged by the advent of conservative newspapers on college campuses, the graduates of those papers have so far not demonstrated much progress in infiltrating the ranks of the profession. And even if they should begin to do so, Rusher for one might not be wholly pleased, since he has rather strict standards concerning who or what makes a genuine conservative. Neither George Will ("a holder of elegant Tory opinions, but a dependable critic of Agnew, Nixon, and finally Reagan") nor William Safire ("in the grip of various overriding preoccupations—notably Israel") seems to qualify.

ANOTHER, perhaps better, route is that proposed by Clurman—namely, somehow to persuade reporters, whatever their political persuasion, of the need to be fair, careful, and self-restrained in presenting the news. Actually, Clurman indicates that pressure in that direction might be coming from without. For one thing, we may conceivably see a tightening of "the intentionally permissive laws of libel." Clurman quotes the warning of Abraham Sofaer, the judge who presided

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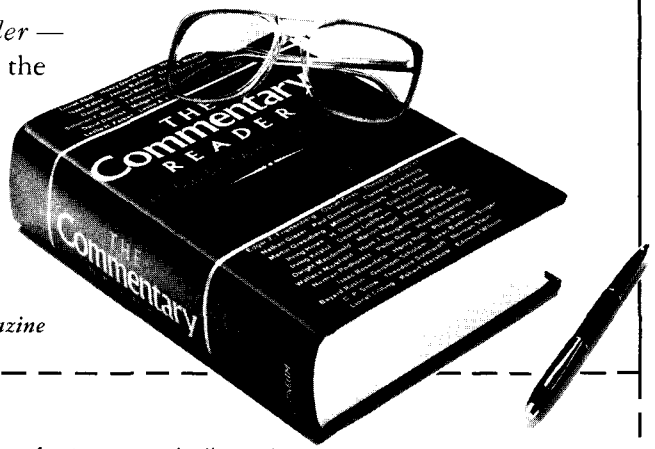

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in the Sharon case, that without a "new emphasis on truth, the law may well change again to the detriment of the press." (Most legal experts, however, doubt that such a move is on the horizon.) Clurman also believes there may be a trend toward "widespread formal surveillance" of the media in the manner of the longstanding British Press Council, although this is unthinkable without the full concurrence of the press itself. But ideally Clurman would prefer a voluntary approach, according to which the press would undertake to report more regularly and fully and critically on itself, and major news organizations would begin to admit and correct their mistakes by publishing negative letters from readers and clarifications from editors.

A liberal of the old school, Clurman is optimistic—too optimistic. He is the sort of journalist who, being himself painfully conscientious about telling both sides of a story, would like to believe that at bottom his colleagues really are no different. He quotes approvingly the Washington *Post*'s David Broder: "There is about as much ideology in the average Washington reporter as there is vermouth in a very dry martini." Clurman does not tell us when Broder made this remark, but whatever truth there may have been in it fifteen or twenty years ago, today one need only compare the scrupulous reporting of Broder himself with that of the *Post*'s young Sidney Blumenthal to see that it is no longer true. Unlike yesterday's journalists, who often came from blue-collar backgrounds and who worked under newspaper barons of both liberal and conservative persuasions, today's are (or aspire to be) members of an East Coast elite suffused with a monolithic set of attitudes toward their society and their culture. Much like their counterparts now ensconced in the universities, they wield their influence boldly.

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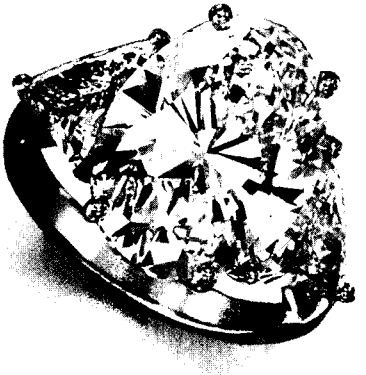

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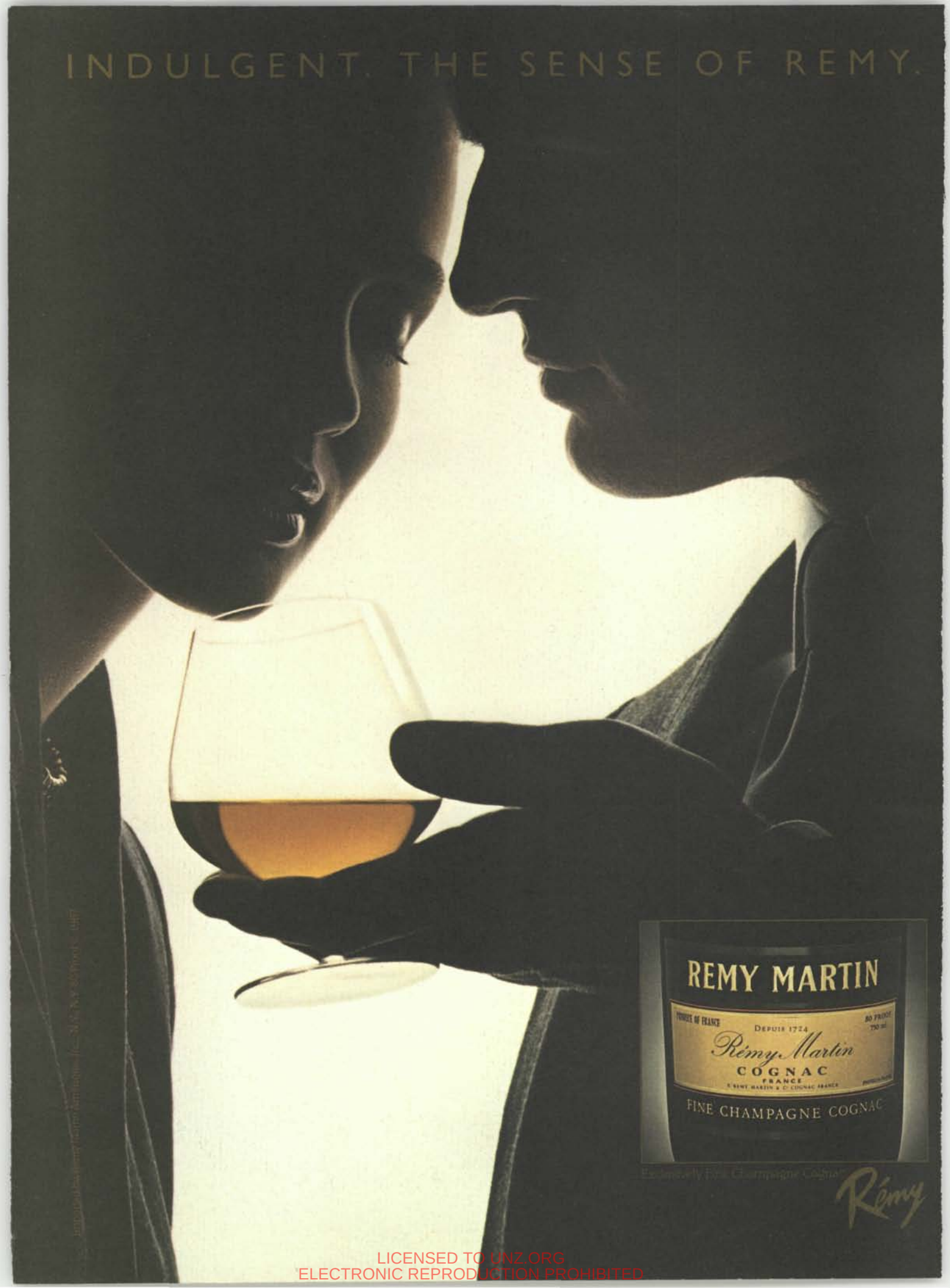

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